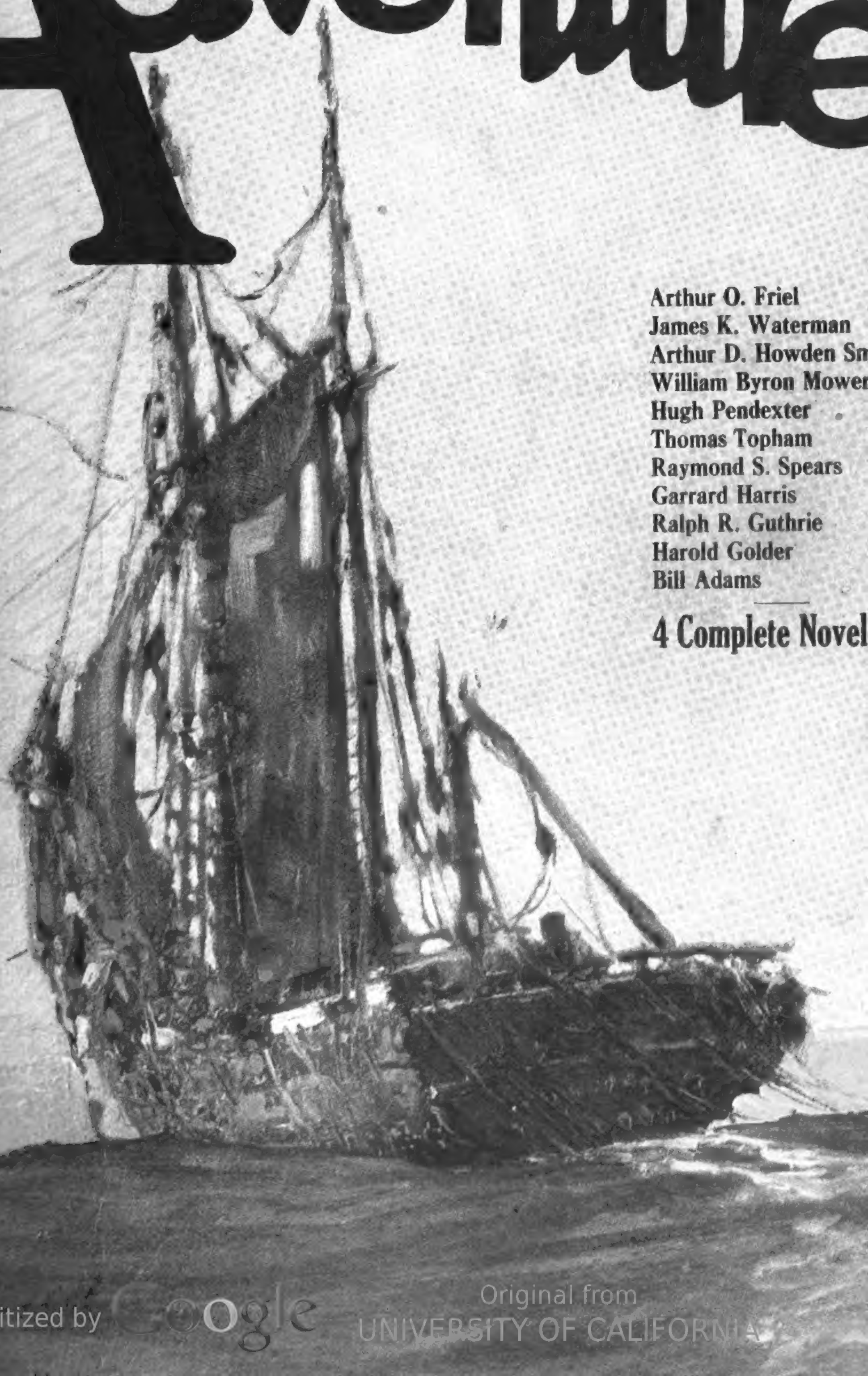
ADAMS
Black Jack
CHEWING GUM
AMERICAN CHICLE COMPANY
"Good old licorice flavor!"

© 1923, American Chicle Co.

ANUARY
th
24
c

PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

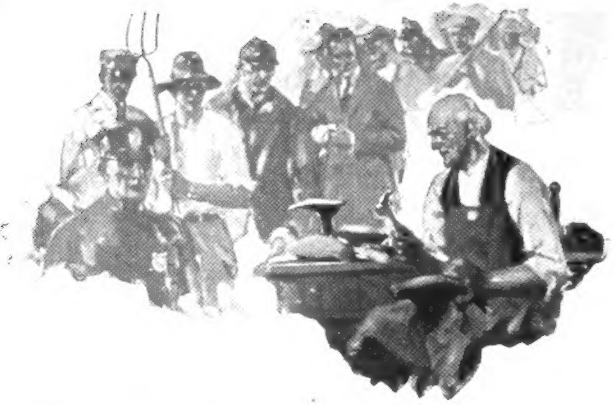
Adventure



Arthur O. Friel
James K. Waterman
Arthur D. Howden Sn
William Byron Mower
Hugh Pendexter
Thomas Topham
Raymond S. Spears
Garrard Harris
Ralph R. Guthrie
Harold Golder
Bill Adams

---

4 Complete Novel



The men who are hardest on shoes will tell you why—*Nothing takes the place of Leather!*

The Old Shoemaker says:

"A-course, I may be prejudiced. I suppose I am. Ever since I was knee-high I've been working with leather in one way or another and I know there's nothing in the world like it.

"It doesn't seem so long ago that most of my business was making shoes—every stitch, thread and heel-peg was my own.

"I know that I'm out o' the runnin' so far as shoemaking is concerned. I come in on the repairs. Put new soles and heels on them. Leather soles and heels that'll outwear any substitute you can name.

"Yes, I've tried all sorts of things for soles and heels and I've come to the conclusion that when you try to imitate nature or go her one better you're getting in over your head and hands.

"Well, come in again. Will those soles and heels wear? Why, friend, they're leather—real honest leather. There's real comfort in those shoes now and they won't come back to me again for months."

MAN has never learned to compete with nature in the manufacture of leather. To-day's leather is far superior to that of even a few years ago—methods of tanning have improved, the fashioning of shoes and other articles of leather has progressed. *But* leather—nature's product—always has been and is to-day supreme. There is nothing like it.

This is what the host of those who are on their feet most will tell you. The veteran policeman, the mail man, the farmer, the soldier, the street-car conductor, the saleswoman, the structural steel worker who depends upon his footwear for a perfect grip on narrow footings far in the air—ask any of them.

They will tell you that for real economy *nothing takes the place of leather.* That for cool comfort and ease—there is nothing like leather.

A veteran police officer, Jacob L. Buchanan, of the Philadelphia city police force, says about shoes of leather:

"New shoes last me five or six months, and then I have them resoled and they are good for the rest of the year. Generally I have them rebuilt once more, and that means another five months' hard wear. When you tramp a beat for hours like I do, you want your feet to feel comfortable, and you don't want to feel the pavement through them. So, I make sure that they have solid leather soles and heels. Nothing else is near so easy on the feet. I have tried other things once or twice; but I stick to leather now."

It is only natural that these men should find, through their practical experience, that "nothing takes the place of leather" for them. Leather is composed of thousands of tiny elastic fibres, tunneled with pores. Muscles can move under leather. Feet can breathe—yet, they are kept warm. That is why leather-shod feet are comfortable—comfortable after hours of walking. And that is why leather wears and wears as nothing else can. Leather is nature's product, nothing can take the place of it.

AMERICAN SOLE *and* BELTING LEATHER TANNERS
17 Battery Place, New York City

Tanning is one of the world's oldest and most important industries. Yet, despite its venerable age, the spirit of accomplishment is ever young and ever growing. Scarcely a year passes without some new, forward step being made to give the public a greater value for its money. The tanning industry operates great research laboratories where eminent chemists are constantly experimenting to improve leather. That is why leather is better to-day than it ever was. And why you will get more satisfaction from good leather shoes, belts, and other articles now than ever before.

Adventure

Registered in
U. S. Patent Office

January 20, 1924 Vol. XLIV No. 5

Published Three Times a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President
C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York, N. Y.
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $6.00 in advance

Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents

Foreign postage, $3.00 additional. Canadian postage, 90 cents.

Trade-Mark Registered; Copyright, 1923, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. Entered at Stationers' Hall, London, England.

The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Contents for January 20th, 1924, Issue

Thicker Than Water *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . **Arthur O. Friel** 1
Brazil—enemies, both expatriates, meet in the jungle.

How It Worked . . . . **William Byron Mowery** 34
Labrador—man-hunting strategy.

Swain's End *A Complete Novelette* . . . . **Arthur D. Howden Smith** 37
Iceland—the greatest battle of the North.

The Man in the Water . . . . **James K. Waterman** 68
Out of the port of New Bedford—"Get the whale, not the man."

Odd Ways of the Grizzly *Nature Notes* . . . . . **Austin Hall** 72

The Long Knives *A Five-Part*Story Part III* . . . . **Hugh Pendexter** 73
Ohio frontier of 1793—Shawnee captors and American slaves.

Slants on Life *The Jailer* . . . . **Bill Adams** 91

Proof Marks on Old Firearms . . . . **Lewis Appleton Barker** 92

Captain Tookle Tames a Queen . . . . **Thomas Topham** 93
Lower California—stern methods for a lawless land.

Slants on Life *Under Dogs* . . . . **Bill Adams** 106

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from preceding page)

Hike's End *A Complete Novelette* . . . . **Harold Golder** 108
Germany—doughboys adrift.

Service Trouble at Talking Crow . . . . . . **Raymond S. Spears** 124
Southwest—midnight autos in a desert of mystery.

Nugent Amuck . . . . **Ralph R. Guthrie** 132
Philippines—Mohammed and the "miracle-makers."

Below the Surface *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . . **Garrard Harris** 146
New Orleans—Government agents and law-breakers.

The Camp-Fire **A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers** 175

Camp-Fire Stations 182

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 182

Old Songs That Men Have Sung 182

Ask Adventure 183
A free question and answer service bureau of information on outdoor life and activities everywhere. Comprising sixty-two geographical sub-divisions, with special sections on Radio, Mining and Prospecting, Weapons Past and Present, Salt and Fresh Water Fishing, Tropical Forestry, Aviation, Army Matters, United States and Foreign; and American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal.

Lost Trails 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . **Bernard Westmacott**

Cover Design . . . . **H. C. Murphy**

One Novel, Two Novelettes, Complete

THE chief of the Cossacks had been taken prisoner by the Turks, who demanded a ransom of ten thousand gold sequins. Made desperate by the need of money, *Demid* and *Ayub* decide to raid Aleppo, in the heart of the enemy's country, for the ransom. Their first prize is a Turkish galley. Here they find "the witch"—strange child of a harem, who alternately helps and hinders them until the walls of Aleppo are in sight and victory is almost within their grasp. "THE WITCH OF ALEPPO," a complete novel by Harold Lamb in the next issue.

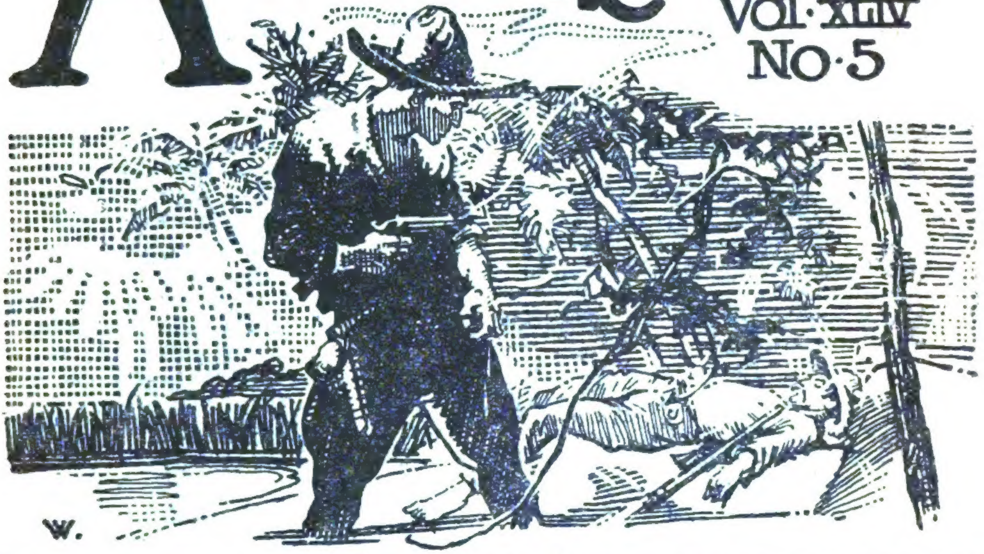
"SMALLPOX ISLAND" they called it; and there, sweltering under the tropic sun of Guantanamo Bay, the quarantined sailors, maddened by inaction, start a feud which threatens to end in the court martial of either one faction or the other. At last the officer in charge resorted to extreme measures with results which he did not expect. "FLATFOOT STRATEGY," a complete novelette by Charles Victor Fischer in the next issue.

TROUBLE started when *Brannon* of the Air Service made a forced landing that almost smashed the machinery of a would-be oil well. This near disaster did not quite explain to *Brannon* the pugnacious efforts of the boss of the outfit to get him off the grounds, and he decided to do a little investigating, in the course of which he had reason to be thankful for the speed of his two feet and of his little plane. "DON'T SWAT A FLYER," by Thomson Burtis, is a complete novelette in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**

Adventure
Jan·20
1924
Vol·XLIV
No·5



THICKER THAN WATER

A Complete Novelette

by Arthur O. Friel

Author of "The Thirty Gang," "Black White," etc.

THE shooting ceased.

For a couple of long minutes the only sound to break the stillness of the Orinoco noon was the rumbling of the deadly Atures rapids. Then a macaw screamed harshly in the bush; a howling monkey roared curses at the gunshots which had aroused him from *siesta;* and, in the tiny houseless clearing forming the "port" of Salvajito, broke out the voices of men.

They were lying prone in the edge of the bush, those desperadoes: all clutching guns, all facing toward a bullet-pitted tree across the open space; all, that is, except two whose faces were in the dirt and whose hands held rifles in the fixed grip of death. In the clearing between them and the tree lay two more bodies, one huddled and one asprawl, with guns beside them.

"*Capitán!*" called one of the half-hidden men. " 'El Tigre!' Peace!"

From the tree came no sound.

"He is dead, the accursed gringo," ventured another. "Teófilo killed him."

"*Bobo!* Fool! Did he not kill Teófilo and Ramón after he was hit?" jeered a third. "For what is he called El Tigre? He is most dangerous when hurt. Now he only waits for us to come out. I am not coming. I am going."

Creeping backward, he turned and scrambled on all fours toward the edge of the steep bank, below which a long dug-out bobbed uneasily on swirling waters. The others, after calling and watching a minute longer, followed his example.

"Thicker Than Water," copyright 1923, Arthur O. Friel.

Copyright, 1923, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. All rights reserved.

Once started, they seemed seized by panic; no man wished to be left behind. Dodging through the dry brush with much noise of breaking twigs, they dropped like monkeys down the bank. The first man already had leaped into the canoe and, in his haste to be gone, was lifting his machete to cut the *piassava* rope. With a startled chorus of curses the rest rushed the boat. The machete fell while they still were jumping. The last boarder landed in the bottom just as the craft went lunging away in the grip of a powerful out-current.

So heedlessly had they piled into the *curial* that it was listing dangerously. A simultaneous frantic scramble for paddles resulted in hurt fingers, sharp oaths, and blows. Two infuriated men suddenly locked in a murderous grapple. A cross-current did the rest.

The canoe turned turtle. The river, with a savage hiss of joy, swept boat and struggling men away toward the rapids.

Not a man was a strong swimmer. Two could not swim a stroke. In a few minutes the *raudal* had them all. That *raudal* is six miles long, and no creature can pass through it alive. Below it lie big, watchful crocodiles.

The macaw stopped screeching, and the howler resumed his doze. Vultures already were at work on the pair in the clearing. The other two, concealed in the bush and thus far undiscovered except by ants, lay like logs. Behind the scarred tree another man slowly raised his head from the leaves and blinked dizzily at nothing.

For a moment he lay, his eyes changing from blue vacancy to cold steel. His lids narrowed to slits, behind which those hard eyes slid from side to side—seeing only the brush, but following the sounds which floated to his ears. Apparently the noise of quarreling vultures was familiar and told him what he wanted to know; for when he moved it was abruptly and noisily. Too, he swore most audibly and most fluently.

Turning over, he sat up and struck and clawed at his left shoulder, where ants were swarming on a raw red hole. His thin, faded blue shirt was dyed with blood from that shoulder-wound, and his brown hair and beard were matted with more of it from a gash near the crown—the bullet-blow which had knocked him senseless. With a yank he tore the left sleeve out bodily. With another he ripped the old cloth from collar to sleeve-band, exposing the whole shoulder. Pulling off the last of the ants—some of which left heads and jaws fastened in the flesh—he pitched erect and glanced around the clearing beyond. Then he stooped, picked up two revolvers, holstered one, and, gripping the other, strode out.

The black destroyers rose in a flurry, swung about, and settled again at a short distance. Moving with a slight stagger but with catlike smoothness, the tall blond stepped to the two torn men and eyed them. Then he drifted along the edge of the bush, scanning the empty water. Finally he returned to the tree, viewed its bullet-scars, and gave a hard chuckle.

"Pretty decent shooting," he approved, his tone satiric. "Didn't forget what I drilled into you about aiming low, did you, you bums? But you did forget that El Tigre could shoot with both paws and dodge like a cat. And why didn't you finish me when I was down, instead of making a break up the river? Thought I was too dead to bother with, maybe. Well, *adios*—until I see you again. Then you'll be sorry you didn't make sure."

Turning again to the two in the clearing, he scowled.

"Wanted to be boss, Teófilo, didn't you? And you nearly made good. How come that you missed that first shot, when I wasn't looking? That was a —— bad social error. Oh, well. Guess I'll get washed and back-track to Benito's. Lend me your hat, Teófilo. Lost mine there in the bush, and it'll be hot as —— out yonder."

Holstering his other gun, he picked up a straw sombrero lying beside the sprawling individual and tried it on. It fitted fairly well. Moving to the edge of the bank, he looked down, stood a minute, and then felt his wounded shoulder.

"It'll be a stiff climb back here," he soliloquized. "And— Oh, let the wash-up slide until we get to Benito's. Left arm's no good. May be busted or something. Feels like it."

So, instead of descending the bank, he reloaded his right-hand gun—which still held two shots—by gripping it between his knees and feeding in cartridges from one of his twin belts; then turned and marched away, with only a mocking grin at the men he left behind him. The vultures flapped aloft, planed over him, and swirled down on Teófilo and Ramón.

ALONG a short tree-cañon marched the long, lean Tigre. Then he emerged into an open savanna of rolling knolls, tremendous black boulders, and rock-hard gray ant-hills, with stunted trees standing singly and *moriche* palms growing in clumps. There smote the full fury of the sun, and there swarmed the myriad mosquitoes which are the curse of the region; but his bronzed, toughened skin seemed not to feel either heat or bites. There, too, wound the portage-road along which all men and all cargoes must pass when journeying up or down the middle Orinoco; but his chilled-steel gaze seemed not to see it, though his *alpargatas* swung unerringly along its track. He was looking at something else—something in his mind. And, as he walked, his scowl bit deeper and deeper into his brow.

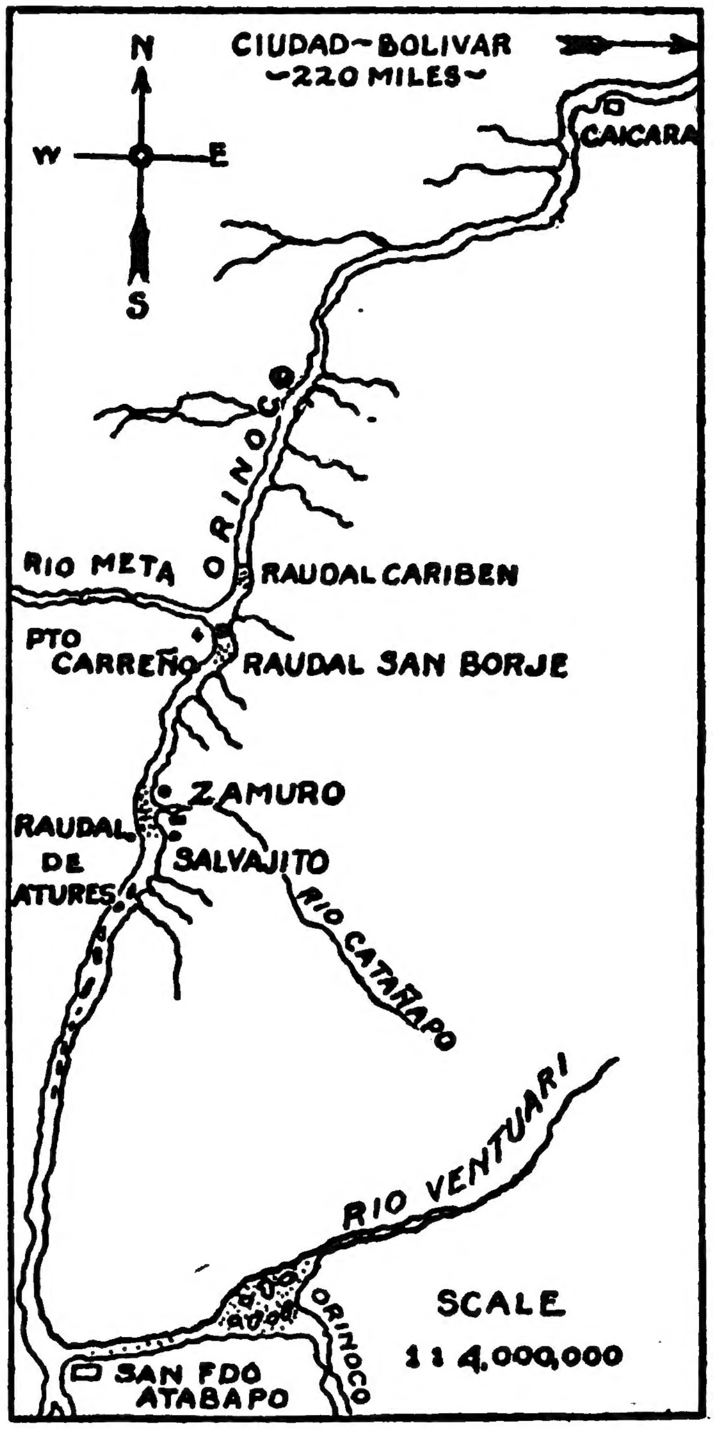
"I'm getting old!" he growled. "Old—at thirty-four! Slipping. Losing my grip. Let that sneak of a Teófilo almost do me in. And I —— well knew he was fixing to get control of the gang, too. Never thought he had the guts to make a gun-fight of it—even from behind. Thought he'd try a knife in the night, and I was ready for that. And then he pulls this gun-stuff, in full daylight, and thereby catches me with my eyes shut. Had the whole pack with him, too. A —— of a bandit chief you are, 'Hard Hart!'"

For a mile he plodded along without another word. Around him lay only empty savanna, silence, and grilling heat. Once or twice he glowered down at the wounded shoulder. The rest of the time his eyes roved as if subconsciously seeking an enemy.

"Busted!" he grumbled then. "Busted flat. Gang's gone. One arm's knocked cuckoo. Nothing left but one good gun-hand. Maybe that's not so good, either. Seems as if I ought to have landed more bullets than I did. Anyway, I'm down and out. What's the good of this kind of a life? Nothing but sun and bugs and shooting and getting shot. Wonder if Benito will double-cross me too. Probably. Well, we'll see."

Another mile. Then he loosened his right gun, warily eying a half-dozen adobes ahead—the revolution-ruined village of Atures. No menace showed. Only two of the houses were tenanted, and at this hot hour neither revealed human forms. The wounded man shuffled past and left them behind.

A quarter-hour later he neared another house: a sprawling adobe, with corral and several palm-thatched sheds scattered about. It was the rancho of Pablo Benito, owner of the crude bullock-cart portage service, fronting the little black Rio Catañapo. It drowsed in the heat, and the swift reconnaissance of El Tigre found no sign of any new arrival. Into the littered yard he passed, and up on the dirt-floored porch he stepped without slowing his pace. Then, in one instant, he froze in his tracks.



The narrow front door was partly open, and from the interior sounded a voice new to El Tigre: a contralto voice speaking Spanish with some difficulty.

"But I pay—I will pay—when I reach Ciudad Bolívar," it was saying. "I pay you much. But now I have no money, *señor*. I must go——"

"I am sorry, *señorita*, but it is impossible," interposed the shrewd voice of Benito. "I cannot leave my good business here. I do not know that you can pay what you promise. If you had money with you— Come, now, you must have some money, *señorita*. Only let me see it, and then——"

El Tigre passed to the door, kicked it open, strode in. Two people sprang up from chairs beside a crude table. One, his leathery face seamed in an alarmed squint, was Benito. The other, slim and straight, garbed in mannish shirt and riding-breeches and natty boots, was a dark-eyed but white-faced girl of North America.

"*Ca-ca-caramba!*" stuttered Benito. "*Es El Tigre!* Why are you here again so soon, *amigo?* You are wounded! What has——!"

"Give me a drink!" the Tiger harshly broke in. "*Ron! Pronto!*"

"*Si—si*—at once, *compañero!*"

Benito was gone and was back again, bearing a cracked cup half full of colorless rum. Meanwhile the man and the girl looked straight at each other; the man's eyes bold and cynical, the girl's steady and searching. And now, as Benito advanced with the liquor, she too moved forward.

"Are you the Tiger?" she asked, her voice calm and clear. "Yes? Then you are an American and a friend. I am very glad to meet a friend."

And she held out a hand.

The Tiger stared as if dumbfounded. Slowly his good hand rose, removed his sombrero, dropped it to the floor. Still more slowly, it went forward to meet hers. With a quick, boyish grip she grasped it and released it.

"Friend?" he muttered. "It's been a long time since I was anybody's friend!" Then, his gaze straying to Benito: "Drink that stuff yourself, Pablo. Get me some water."

II

WHEN Benito fetched the water, the Tiger gulped it as he had intended to gulp the rum. Then he nodded toward a chair.

"Sit down and take it easy, Miss ——"

"Rogers. Jean Rogers."

"Miss Rogers. My name's Hart. Sometimes called Hard Hart, because I'm so soft-hearted." His cynical grin flickered again under his beard. "I want to borrow this fellow a few minutes as my valet. We'll be back. Pablo, *vamos!*"

He strode toward the door, the Venezuelan preceding him in obvious perturbation but in silence. Along the porch they passed, and into another cool room. There Hart gave brief commands:

"Bring in some more water. Bring a sharp knife. Tell your *señora* to come here and dig out this bullet. And fetch me a clean shirt, if you own one."

"But the bullet—I can take that out, *amigo!* I can——"

"Do as I say! You might become nervous, Pablo, and let the knife slip sidewise into my throat. Your woman is better at such work. Bring her, and be quick."

Seating himself in an idle hammock, he waited. Presently Benito and his *señora*—a capable-looking little woman—came in. Unlike her husband, the lady of the *rancho* did not look worried or seem to be in awe of the tall gunman. She was used to gun-fighters and bullet-wounds, for she came of a fighting family; in fact, all her male blood-relatives had died with their *alpargatas* on. Now, after a brief examination, she went to work with deft skill. The Tiger, his teeth clenched, sat dumb until the slug was out.

"Anything broken?" he asked then. "The arm is dead."

"No, *señor*," she calmly replied. "The ball touched the bone but did not break it. The arm will be useless for a time. But it will mend. How did it happen?"

"My man Teófilo Ramirez wished to become *capitán*."

"Ah!" Benito nodded vigorously. "So that was it! And—what of Teófilo?"

"He and three others are at Salvajito. Many *zamuros* also are there."

"*Si? Caramba!* Four of them! And—the others?"

"I sent them up the river to do certain things. I rest here until they return."

"*Si. Bueno!* I have much pleasure in serving my good friend El Tigre. Everything I own is at your order, *amigo*."

"Without doubt. *Señora*, draw the bandage a little more tight. *Gracias*. Now you will wash my head— That is very good. Now, Pablo, what of the *señorita?*"

The master of the cart-road looked troubled. He wondered how much El Tigre had heard before kicking in the door. After a bit of hesitation he told the whole truth:

"She came in a gas *lancha*, she says, from Bolívar, with her father. He was a *Norte Americano* who came to see the river and go home and write about it. That is what she says, but I can not believe it. Who would ever write about this ugly old river, and who would read about it? There is no gold in it!

"But she says her father quarreled with the crew about something, and became so excited that his heart stopped, and he was dead. And then the crew took everything and left her. But they could not make the engine work, so they left the gas-boat too, and went away *por tierra*—overland. She made the engine run and came here. She wants me to give her food and find a new crew and go with her back to Bolívar. But I am a poor man—I can not do those things for promises! I must see money, or it is impossible."

The Tiger eyed him coldly.

"Impossible to give her food?" he demanded.

"For the journey to Bolívar, I mean, *señor!*" Benito hastily corrected. "She is welcome to sit at my poor table, most certainly. But those other things—travel-food and men and my own services—they are too much for a poor man."

"I see." There was a distinct sneer in the Tiger's tone. "With money anything is possible. Without it, one can go to ——. Especially a *Norte Americano*. Just so. How many hundred pesos are hidden in this house at this minute?"

So sudden and sharp was the question that Benito backed away, his face betraying guilty alarm. Hart laughed harshly.

"Yes, you are poor!" he mocked. "Every cart-load of stuff that travels this road pays you eight pesos, and you never spend a *real*. Poor! Ha! But have no fear. I never rob the poor, and I now owe a debt to your *señora*."

Rising, he stalked out. Benito looked nervously at his wife, who glanced back at him with some amusement.

"Have no fear, *pobrecito*," she echoed, a little scornfully. "El Tigre is a man of hard hand but of good heart. I wish you were such a man, Pablo."

With that she turned her back on her lord and master and left him. Every Venezuelan woman loves a fighter.

IF THE painful extraction of the bullet had weakened the Tiger he gave no sign of it as he swung along the porch and re-entered the room where waited Jean Rogers. She was again at the table, her head resting on her arms. At the slight sound of his footsteps she looked up; passed a hand across wet eyes, and tried to smile.

"Now that I'm dressed up, let's have a talk," he said, genially. "My valet's shirt is a bit tight for me, but if I don't take a full breath it won't rip. That's right, smile! Smile if it hurts—you feel better afterward. I can't always do it myself, but it's easy to tell other folks what to do. Well, now, what do you know about Hard Hart, alias El Tigre?"

Under cover of his banter he eyed her keenly. Her reply was immediate and direct.

"I don't know much about Hard Hart, but I've heard some things about El Tigre. Men say he is a white North American and the head of a band of rebels and *guapos*—that means 'outlaws', doesn't it?"

"Something like that. Well, what else?"

"That's about all, except that he stays most of the time in the country south of here and west of the river, which is claimed by both Venezuela and Colombia and is really no man's land; so neither country tries very hard to catch him."

"Uh-huh. Letting me alone is quite a safe-and-sane idea. But how did you get the impression that such a hard citizen could be a friend of yours? Don't you know that a renegade is a man without a country and an all-around bad actor?"

"No, I don't know that," she denied, regarding him confidently. "Dad and I have traveled into some out-of-the-way places before now, and met more than one American who—well, who couldn't go back home. Two or three of them told us why they couldn't go back, too, and some of the things they had done were pretty bad. But we never met one who didn't treat us well, or who refused to help us in any way possible—even at considerable risk. And I've never heard that El Tigre was either cowardly or mean."

The dark eyes challenged him. He flushed.

"That's nice," was his dry retort. "And just what assistance can I give you?"

"You can help me return to Ciudad

Bolívar. I—I can't go beyond here now, and I must go back. My father—is——"

"I know," he broke in quickly. "Benito told me. Where did it happen?"

"Just a little way below here. The men—they took everything. But they weren't so bad; they buried him, and they didn't harm me. I managed to find the port below here, and followed the road to this place. But now this man—Benito, do you call him?—he won't do anything to help me go back unless I give him money, and of course I haven't any here. I can pay him handsomely when I reach the bank at Bolívar, but he doesn't believe that. I—I don't know what to do, unless you'll *make* him help me."

"I guess that can be arranged." His tone was casual, but held a grim undernote. "It may take a day or two to fix matters—I'm a little tired just now. But don't worry. Everything will be fixed up. Now I'm going to lie down."

He turned doorward. She sprang up, her face suddenly aglow.

"Mr. Tiger, you're just a dear!"

"Humph! Thanks!"

He moved away.

"And I want *you* to go down the river with me, too!"

"What?"

He spun around, staring.

"To keep the new men under control, you know."

"Oh!" He laughed shortly. "Do you realize that I'm a *guapo*, young lady? And that I can be shot on sight by any federal authority? And that I'm alone, with only one good arm, and without my gang to back me up?"

"Yes, I realize all that. But must you have a gang behind you before you dare to take a chance?"

Again he flushed; and this time the red wave was of anger. His eyes hardened. His teeth clicked shut. For a moment he glared. Then, with a wordless growl, he swung through the doorway and was gone.

III

IN THE palm-fiber hammock wherein he had endured the capable but crude surgery of Señora Benito, the erstwhile leader of the Tigre gang lay and scowled at the mass of trees bordering the Catañapo. The hammock now hung in the shade of the Benito porch: shade which was little less hot than the white sun-glare just beyond, and within which swarmed *la plaga*—the mosquito plague. It would have been more comfortable to recline within the cool room behind him, but he stayed outside for two reasons. One was that the room had, for the past two days, been allotted to Jean Rogers. More important was the fact that here he could see any one coming.

Now there was nothing to see; and he was absently looking at things gone by and far away. Judging from his moody expression and the hard set of his jaw, the memories were not tender. He was, in fact, viewing himself in a life now left behind him.

He saw Alan Hart, student in a California college; too full of deviltry to get on well with the faculty, and—after three years—finally expelled. He watched Al Hart, rover and rider of the mountains and the plains, go drifting about with never a care and with sometimes a fight. He glanced at Private Hart, drilling with a Western outfit, eating up the soldier game and straining to get over-seas. Then he viewed the trenches, and Sergeant Hart—Lieutenant Hart—Captain Hart, commanding a hard-boiled company which acknowledged his merciless mastery by naming him Hard Hart.

After the armistice, New York; and, presently, Mr. Hart, dealer in oil stocks by day and plunging poker-player by night. Then the crash—a row with his business partner; a savage fight; the partner dead on the floor, his skull broken by hitting a radiator as he fell; a fistful of money snatched from the safe, and—exit. Next to last, El Tigre, raider and occasional revolutionist. Last of all, a crippled outlaw, hanging alone in a hammock, mechanically fanning away mosquitoes, and hungrily staring northward toward the land to which he must not return.

"A —— of a fine mess of a life!" he reflected. "About time you turned over a new leaf, Al. Nope. Too late. You've fought in three continents, gotten in bad all around, and hit the end of your rope. You're no good even as a South American revolutionist; can't get in on the next war now, with your gang smashed. Yellow-bellied snakes! Wonder where they all are now. Hope it's a long way off—so far that nobody finds out about it until my arm's good again. With both hands working I may have a fighting chance."

Moodily he cogitated on the completeness of his downfall. Only a little while ago his gang had been solid and compact—forty hard riders, well-armed and mounted. In the guerrilla warfare of Venezuelan revolutions, such a band is a valuable asset to any rebel leader; and in a couple of past campaigns—which eventually failed because of treachery and exhaustion of ammunition—the Tigre outfit had fought like the jungle-cat whose name they bore. Now another revolt was brewing; and, with only a dozen men, El Tigre had journeyed down-river by canoe to learn what was in it for him..

It was on his way back—at Salvajito, in fact—that he had met one of his followers bearing bad news; the bulk of his force had decided in his absence to quit him and operate under another leader, and they had gone west. And then Teófilo had seized his apparent chance to snatch control of the remaining few, who had promptly backed up his attempt to eliminate their hard boss.

"And that's what you get for mixing into other people's wars, and it serves you —— well right," he told himself. "Show up again at Puerto Carreño now, and you know what'll be your finish. Those fellows who were promising to make you a general will make you a 'good Indian' instead. Where do we go from here, boy? Got to go somewhere. Going north means getting bumped off. Going east means starving in the mountains, or an Indian arrow through your ribs. West is that damned Colombia, no better than here. South? That's more like it. If you can get to the Negro and down to the Amazon, there's a fine large piece of territory and no extradition. It'll be a —— of a trip, but that's the way out."

"Dreaming, Sir Tiger?" asked a quiet voice behind him.

Startled, he looked around, meeting the steady gaze of the girl from his own land. She moved forward from the doorway through which she had come.

"When are you going down the river with me?" she went on. "I'm getting dreadfully tired of this place."

Without reply, he looked wistfully at her. Two days of rest and safety and the best food the *rancho* afforded had restored the color to her cheeks and brought a sparkle to her eyes; and now, gazing up into her rounded, rose-tinted face, he sighed. Then he turned his eyes to the trees.

"I believe you said Benito had consented to go, with some men of his," she added. "But now I'm waiting for you. Isn't the arm better?"

"Not much. Stiff and useless. But you don't need me. Benito will be all right when he gets started. He'll start any time now. I'm not traveling in your direction. I'm heading south."

"South? To meet your men?"

"Nope. They dont' need me, either. I'm going clear to Brazil. Tired of this section."

"I should think you would be! Do you really like this wild life down here? And the heat and insects and——"

"Stop it!" he snapped. "Don't rub it in. I can't go back home."

"Why not?"

"Killed a man, if you have to know. Killed quite a few in other places, too, but that was all right. Killed some overseas; that was supposed to be heroic, because they wore gray clothes instead of khaki. Killed some more down here, but they were hard nuts like me, so nobody cared. But because I killed a low-down crook in my own country—a sneaking under-handed dog that was doing me out of my own money—for that, if you please, I must go to the chair if they ever catch me. No, thanks. I'm staying in South America until my game's played out."

Had he glanced at her then, he might have discerned an odd expression on her face; a half-smile on her lips, a glint of knowledge under her curving brows, which would have aroused the habitual suspicion ever alive in hunted men. But by the time he turned to her the look had fled. She now regarded him soberly.

"Did you murder him?" she questioned.

"No. Murder is premeditated. It was a fight—rough-and-tumble—and his head smashed on a radiator. But the rotten laws in New York State don't give a man a chance. They can send you to the pen for about ninety-nine years if you even have spunk enough to carry a gun."

"But if you went back and told the truth of the matter——"

He laughed scornfully.

"Truth? Who'd believe it? It's too late. Let's forget it. I'll stick around here until

I'm sure Benito has gone with you, and then—I'll move. Do you try to get every American criminal you meet to go back and take what's coming to him? Where did you see other bums like me, anyway?"

Thoughtfully she watched him a minute before replying. Then, with a little sigh, she said:

"We—dad and I—were in Mexico, and the South Seas, and Argentina—oh, several places. He made a boy of me, in a way, and we've seen some queer spots. No, I don't know that I ever tried to send a man home before. I could see that there was no chance—they had native wives and families, or else they—well, they just couldn't go, for one reason or another. But somehow it seems to me that you can go, if you will. You can at least go part of the way, unless you're afraid of something——"

He swung his feet over the edge, sat up, and glared.

"Listen!" he warned her. "Don't keep harping on that 'afraid' string! I've heard it before, and it was always played by people who wanted to dare me into something for their own purposes. If I hear you use it much more I'll begin to think——"

He stopped abruptly. His head turned. Into his face shot a wary, watchful expression, and his eyes drew into slits through which he peered fixedly at something beyond the bullock-corral. His hand slid to the butt of the long revolver lying in the hammock, beside his right leg.

"Go inside," he ordered in a changed tone.

She whirled and looked.

Striding soft-footed along the overland trail and approaching the house—almost entering the yard, in fact—came a dozen hard-faced, straw-sombreroed, rifle-bearing men.

IV

SHARD HART sat stark and silent as the squad-column swung into the yard and obliqued toward him. Among the newcomers, who were keenly scanning the sitting man and the standing girl, passed a mutter of mumbled words. Then the heavy-mustached leader grinned and spoke aloud.

"*Es El Tigre,*" he said. "*Buenas tardes, amigo. Como 'stá uste'?* Good afternoon, friend. How are you?"

"*Bien.* Well," came the short answer.

The party slowed, bunched, stopped. Every man stared at the fair-skinned Northern girl, who stood impersonally regarding them. From her dark hair to her high-booted feet they surveyed her, and back again to red lips and cool eyes. On every unshaven yellow face grew bold admiration. The squat-bodied commander belatedly lifted his sombrero. The others slouchily followed his example.

"*Caramba! Qué señorita tan hermosa!* What a beautiful girl!" floridly complimented the heavy-mustached man. "It is a miracle to find here an angel. I am dumb with rapture."

"So we observe," was Hart's dry retort. "Why are you here?"

As the girl's lips twitched with amusement, the other's face became slightly unpleasant. The glance he gave the Tiger was more so. Then his eyes widened as they observed that Hart's left arm was slung inside his shirt.

"*Diablo!*" he ejaculated. "The arm—you are hurt?"

A sudden grunt went among his men as they, too, discovered that El Tigre was a cripple. For an instant all gaped. Then over every visage flickered an evil light, gone almost as soon as seen. The eyes switched to the silent man's gun-arm, and to the capable hand curled loosely around the black butt.

"I asked a question, Diego," the Tiger reminded, his voice hard-edged.

"*Sí.* It is true. I was shocked," Diego excused. "We go down the river with a rubber shipment. Where is Benito? We must have carts."

"Inside, taking a *siesta.*"

Diego and his followers stood a moment longer, looking at the man and the maid. The leader opened his mouth as if to say more, but, meeting the steely gaze of the Tiger, left it unsaid. Abruptly he stepped toward the main doorway, a little farther down the adobe wall. The rest of his gang moved after him. The man in the hammock turned to watch them. Not until he saw them lean their guns against the wall and enter the house did he lose sight of them.

"Where's the six-gun I let you take?" he asked.

"Just inside this door," she answered. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing. Just wanted to know it was where none of those fellows could accidently slip it inside his pants."

"Who are they?"

"Diego Lopez and his pack. From San Fernando de Atabapo."

"Oh." She looked thoughtful. "I've heard some bad things about that town. Is it as bad as they say?"

"It's worse than that," he returned, with a grim smile. "It's the only Orinoco town in the whole Territorio de Amazonas, you know, and so far back in the bush that no federal garrison is stationed there. Which means that any tough egg who finds other places too hot for him can be reasonably safe in the San Fernando section. It's supposed to be under federal control, of course, but—well, the last two governors were shot, and I hear that the present one is likely to go the same route soon. It's a lovely little town. This fellow Lopez lives there. He's a fairly scaly specimen of the ophidian order of reptiles, if you happen to know what that is."

"Snakes," she nodded.

"Exactly."

"He trades in rubber?"

"So he says. He trades in anything that may turn a peso for him—rubber, rum, bodies or souls. Now run along in and shut out the bugs. I'll hang around here a while longer."

She looked soberly at the well-worn rifles standing against the adobe. Then she went in and almost—but not quite—closed the crude plank door. Inside, she swiftly examined the long revolver, mate to the one in his hammock, and verified its readiness for service. Outside, the Tiger sprawled back in his net, watching the gun-flanked doorway and lazily flapping his mosquito-cloth.

MEANWHILE Diego had unceremoniously aroused the dozing Benito and demanded rum. Now, with a jolt of *caballo blanco* under his skin, he was softly demanding:

"Who is the woman? Why is El Tigre here? Where are his men? What of his arm?"

The foxy face of Benito grew a shade more shrewd. Hart had convinced him that it would be much to his financial interest that the young woman should safely reach Ciudad Bolívar—steamship port of the Orinoco—and also that unpleasant consequences might result if she did not arrive there. He knew Diego, and was under no illusions regarding him. Wherefor he dallied with his own drink a moment before answering.

"She is a *señorita* of North America," he then explained. "With her father, she came here on a visit. The father became sick and died. She will now go back to Bolívar. She has the passports of *El Presidente* and of General Perez, *el gobernador* of Bolívar, and she must be well treated by all the world. Her crew has gone back, and I myself shall guide and protect her on her return voyage."

His last announcement was decidedly pompous, and he tried to look formidable. Diego grinned. A snicker passed among his men.

"Is it so? *Caramba*, no dog shall dare to bark when you pass down the river!" jeered Diego. All except Benito guffawed.

"How comes El Tigre here alone? And how came his arm to be hurt?" the inquisitor went on. "Is it a bullet? Who shot him?"

Benito stalled. Though he had scant love for El Tigre, he had none at all for Diego. Too, he realized the value of Hart's backing in playing out his own little game. So, though he now strongly suspected the truth—that the power of El Tigre as a bandit leader had collapsed—he took good care not to reveal it. He knew that no tell-tale bones now remained at Salvajito, for he himself had gone there, salvaged the dead men's guns, and thrown all else into the river. What had become of the rest of the gang he did not know, but it was evident that Diego knew less than he. While he nimbly framed a good lie he answered the first question—

"He and some of his men were down the river on a trip——"

"To where?"

"I do not know. He does not talk of it."

"But you must know. Where?" persisted Diego.

"I say I do not know!" Benito's voice rose in exasperation. "Ask him, if you will. He is outside."

"Softly, softly!" The San Fernando man nodded sidewise toward the porch. "Let it pass. Now you were saying——"

"*Bien*. They came back, and El Tigre wrenched an arm. It is not a wound, no. He slipped on a rock and fell, and the arm went out of joint at the shoulder. He rests a few days to make it well."

"Ah. And his right arm is not hurt?"

"It is not hurt at all. It is even faster than before. And the little *señorita*, too—she now has one of his guns, and, *Madre de Dios*, she is almost better than El Tigre himself!"

"*Como?* The *señorita?* That little girl can shoot a man's gun?"

"Can she shoot? *Mira*—listen! Yesterday she wanted a chicken for dinner. The chicken ran. She took that gun, and—*pam!*—the head of that hen flew off. And the bird was twenty *varas* away and running hard!"

This tremendous lie passed unchallenged. Diego stared thoughtfully at the rum-bottle. Nobody else spoke, until Benito drove home his moral.

"Do not make any mistake," he advised. "That *señorita* dresses like a man and she can shoot like a man. And El Tigre—you know him."

Sour grunts agreed. They knew of several desperadoes who had made mistakes with El Tigre, and who had departed this life at once.

"All of those *Norte Americanos* are devils with a gun, *caramba*," one of Diego's followers muttered. "I have heard that they cut their teeth on a gun-barrel, and that they shoot before they can walk."

"It is a hard country," Benito agreed. "The cousin of my uncle knew a man who knew a man whose woman's brother had been there, and he said the North American women shot their husbands whenever they fancied a new man, and they never were punished. And all the men carry two guns, and in Nueva York are so many fights every night that wagons must clear away the dead in the morning before business can start. They cart the bodies up a river called the River of the East, and dump them in a place called Puerta del Infierno—Hell Gate."

A short silence followed. Several looked uneasily at the door beyond which lay the Tiger.

"But now where are the men of El Tigre?" pondered Diego. "He is alone—he and the woman——"

Benito looked cunning, pretending knowledge which he chose not to reveal.

"They are not far away," he declared. "If he wanted them they would be here at once. If anything should happen to him here, I should not want to be the man who did it. Those men of his——"

He flicked an eloquent forefinger across his throat.

"They are tigers in truth," nodded a man. "And El Tigre himself never sleeps."

"And you do not know what he plans to do next?" Diego quizzed.

"No."

"The *señorita*—is she his woman now?"

Benito considered his answer. The pause saved him from ever making it.

A tall figure loomed in the doorway. A harsh voice smote every man like a blow.

"The affairs of the *señorita* are none of your filthy business!" it rasped. "Get it into your head that she is under my protection. If your and your whole yellow-bellied gang want to know how good that protection is, come out here!"

Dead silence ensued. Only one man moved. That man was Benito, who lifted his lean frame from the chair and slipped back against the nearest wall. For one lone man—even El Tigre—to talk in such fashion to Diego Lopez and his crowd was distinctly bad form, and Benito was not disposed to obtrude his valuable self into the line of fire.

Yet nothing happened. Not even the powerful white rum sizzling in Diego's veins kicked him into action. Though he and all his men carried revolvers and knives, all sat like wooden statues, glowering at the stark figure which stood there with its right hand hanging low.

Diego licked his mustache, wondering how much the Tiger had overheard. Then he spoke, his voice oily:

"You mistake me, *amigo*. I feared some harm might come to the *señorita*. Now that I know you guard her, my mind is at rest."

"Keep it at rest—and your tongue too," was the tart rejoinder. "No harm will come to her, and any man who even speaks about her in the wrong tone will find a *tigre* on his neck. Is anything else worrying you?"

"*No por cierto, señor*—nothing at all. Will you not come and have a drink?"

With a growl, the Tiger backed away and was gone.

The gang from San Fernando drew a long breath. Diego reached mechanically for the bottle. Benito relaxed and began moving toward a rear door. The eyes of Diego fixed on him with an evil gleam.

"*Bobo!* It was your loud words that brought him!" he snarled. "I am of a mind to cut out your tongue."

Benito quickened his pace a little and faded from sight. Diego poured his drink and shoved the bottle along toward the nearest man. There was no more talk of the *señorita*.

And in the next room, on the other side of the eight-foot mud partition which did not rise to the high palm roof, the *señorita* herself noiselessly stepped down from the box, placed in a crude chair, atop which she had stood and watched. In one hand she held the extra gun with which, unsuspected even by the Tiger, she had flanked the men whom he faced. Back into its battered holster she slipped it, and out through the crack in the doorway she peeped at Hart, who once more sat vigilant in his hammock.

"We North Americans, who cut our teeth on gun-barrels," she thought, "must stick together!"

In the mind of the man outside was the same idea.

"Good-by, Brazil!" he muttered. "With this skunk of a Lopez loose around here, our young lady needs a gunman handy. El Tigre now travels north!"

V

OUT of the east, with giant strides, Night stalked athwart the equatorial waste.

Stars bloomed in the sky whence the sun had only just dived below the horizon. As if in answer, scattered lights appeared here and there about the yard of Pablo Benito; lights lacking the purity and steadiness of the high, clean solar spheres; weak, flickering man-lights in dirty oil lanterns. Four of them, there were; two on the porch where the Benito family usually slept, one in the corral where the bullocks rested, and one in an open-sided palm-roofed hut where the hammocks of Diego Lopez and his gang were to be slung.

With the passing of the sun the mosquito-plague also had vanished, but only to give way to other and larger blood-hunters of the dark: the venomous black *zancudo de noche*, whose bite leaves behind it a horrible infected sore; the *murciélago*, or vampire-bat; and the marauding *tigre* and *león*. From the *zancudo* there could be no defense except thick walls or hot mosquito-bar; but against the flame-hating bat and cat the lanterns might—or might not—give a puny protection to sleeping man and domestic beast. So, from dusk to dawn, the four lights would stand guard.

Now, while the men of Diego arranged their hanging nets in their quarters, Diego himself came nonchalantly through the gloom toward the hammock of Hard Hart. He noted that that hammock had been shifted from its previous place and now hung low across the doorway of the room of the *señorita*, completely blocking all ingress; also, that the lounging Tiger was watching him with a scowl. But he affected utter disregard of both these things. With the utmost insouciance he planted himself before the resting man, stared boldly into the darkness beyond the doorway, and, with a confidential smirk, spoke—

"Is the *señorita* within?"

"Why?" countered the cold-eyed American.

"I wish to talk in private."

"About what?"

"About matters of interest to men alone."

Hart gave him a searching scrutiny.

"You can talk. She is with Señora Benito."

"*Bueno!*"

Diego looked carefully about him. He leaned closer. Abruptly he fell back. Hart's hand had moved slightly, and the muzzle of his six-gun yawned at the pit of his visitor's stomach.

"*Diablo!*" sputtered the San Fernando man. "You are too suspicious, *compañero!* Are we not friends?"

"Perhaps." The hand remained steady. "But it is not necessary to whisper. My hearing is good. Stand back a little."

Diego stood back, hooking his thumbs ostentatiously over his belt-buckle, far from his revolver and knife. He shook his head sadly over such open distrust. The Tiger's gun drooped again.

"That is better. Well?"

"*Bien.* What is the word from below?"

Diego twisted his face into a huge wink.

"Meaning?" queried Hart, after another searching glance.

"Ha-ha! You know my meaning. You have been down the river, and you do not take so long a trip for pleasure."

"True. I went to get some matches."

"Matches! Ha, ha, ha! You are a sly one! But—what is the word at Puerto Carreño?"

The blue eyes narrowed. The brown ones glimmered, shrewdly noting that the shot had scored. But the reply was as noncommittal as before.

"Nothing of importance. Pascual Otero was drowned last month. The woman of Antonio Azul died of fever. The fishing is poor, but the turtle-egg crop is big."

"Bah! That is not what I mean." Another stealthy look around. "Soon the rains will come. Then men can travel the *sabana* which now kills with thirst. With the rains will come a new revolution. Puerto Carreño is the place of council. I know, you see. You have been there more lately than I. What is the word?"

This time it was Hart who glanced around; but he did it to mask his thoughts. He had been at Puerto Carreño, where he had learned the revolutionary plans. But the names mentioned by the conspirators had not included that of Diego Lopez. The San Fernando man was bluffing, boring for information. Why? To feather his own nest, of course. Whether he would feather it at the expense of the federals or of the rebels would depend entirely on which allegiance would profit him most.

"I have no word," coldly asserted the Tiger, meeting the probing gaze with a steely stare. "You are going down the river. Stop at Puerto Carreño and ask there for news. Now I am sleepy. Good night."

Diego scowled. His mouth opened, shut, opened again.

"You do not trust me. It is a pity. But I say no more. Yet—a moment. What of the *señorita?* She goes out to return to her country, yes? Then why do you not send her in my *piragua,* which goes to Bolívar with all speed? She shall have all protection——"

A harsh laugh cut him short.

"Thanks!" mocked Hart. "Let her travel with *you?* Humph! She will reach Bolívar long before your rotten *piragua* will, and as for protection—she travels under the protection of El Tigre! Now go to bed. You make me very weary."

Diego's thumbs jerked half-way out from his belt. Hart's hand tightened a mere trifle. The thumbs halted. Diego backed off, turned, faded into the night, muttering a sour, "*Buen' noche*'—good night."

He did not stop or turn on his way to his own lantern, knowing that against its light his progress was visible to the man behind. But, as he walked, his hands slid back to his weapons and his tongue silently formed venomous oaths.

"You whelp of the ——!" he raged. "You will tell me nothing, no? And your *señorita* will go without me, yes? And I make you tired? I may make you more weary before morning! And we shall see how far your woman will go toward Bolívar!"

Straight to his hammock he went, without word or look at his men. As he disappeared, Hart relaxed in his own net. In a little while a candle-light entered the guarded room behind him, burned steadily a minute or two, and was blown out.

"Good night, Mr. Tiger," a voice floated from the darkness.

"Night, Miss Jean. Sleep tight. Nobody'll bother you."

"I'm not afraid."

"M-hm. You needn't be. Oh, by the way—I'm going down the river with you when you start."

"Of course! I'm glad you've made up your mind."

He made no reply.

An hour or two of dozing slipped away. A few feet farther along the porch, Benito snored in his own hammock—with his rifle under him. From the Lopez hut came no sound. A wan moon swam upward among the stars, dropping a spectral light on house, huts, corral. The lanterns burned on.

Another hour. The Tiger's eyes opened. Some instinct had nudged his consciousness. All was not well.

Motionless, he swung his gaze about. At the San Fernando camp no change was visible or audible. On the shadowy porch nothing moved. At the corral——

The corral lantern was out.

A short wick, perhaps, or failure to replenish the oil, had let the little flame die. The bullocks were up. Uneasy movements were succeeded by nervous rumblings. And then, in the dim moonlight, something moved outside the bars: a long, stealthy, silent, earth-hugging thing——

"Ha!" breathed Hart.

He swung his feet to the ground.

THE creeping thing stopped. Blazing eyes glared at the man. Great fangs glimmered faintly in a malignant grimace.

The Tiger arose. Quietly, with neither haste nor caution, he stepped off the porch and walked toward the tense shape crouching beyond.

Between man and giant cat lay not more than twenty paces. Pace after pace, grim and steady as an inexorable machine of death, the man advanced. In his one hand, hanging at his side, dully glinted his long revolver.

Six—seven—eight paces. The malevolent beast poised motionless. Nine—ten—eleven—twelve. The eyes flamed more wickedly; the fangs gleamed more clearly as the lips writhed farther back. Thirteen—fourteen—fifteen. The man slowed to a stop. He had not yet raised his hand.

For a long minute the killers fronted each other. The hand began to rise. The only sound was the sinister *swish swish swish* of a lashing tail sweeping the short grass. Then——

With incredible speed a streak shot along the corral. It was gone.

Hart stood like a statue. Somewhere beyond sounded a faint pat of big paws, bounding with tremendous leaps into the dark. It died. From a spot many yards away broke the coughing, snarling, receding roar of a maddened but cowed *tigre.*

The man turned. Quietly, as before, he returned to the porch; slipped his gun within his waist-band; lifted the nearest lantern from its peg. With it he strode to the corral. Over the bars he swung himself, and among the vicious horns of the half-wild bullocks he walked. Setting down the light, he strode back; crossed the barrier, traversed the yard, lay down again in his hammock, in the dark.

Minutes later, among the shadows at the far end of the porch, a more solid shadow moved. It slid a long knife back into an invisible sheath. By degrees it drifted away, carrying its squat self with utmost caution toward the hut beyond. In the concealment of a bush it crept into the hut by the rear. It lay down in the empty hammock of Diego Lopez, and from its heavy-mustached face it mopped streams of cold sweat.

"*Madre de Dios!*" it breathed. "Did you see that, Diego? A *tigre*—a very devil of a *tigre*—a killer of bulls—hungry and savage! And he walked to it—in the dark—with only his revolver! *Sangre de Cristo!* He is not human! He is a *demonio!* And even the real *tigre* knew it and ran! Praise be to the saints, Diego, that you are safe back in your *chinchorro!* It seemed so easy—Benito would wilt when he knew El Tigre was dead—and then the *señorita* could be seized before she could awake—and we could be safely away. But—*diablo!* You —— -cat, you can keep your woman until I find a way more sure!"

VI

IN THE comparative coolness of early morning, a straggling column wended its way along the three-mile cart-road meandering from the Rio Catañapo to Zamuro, lower port of the Atures rapids.

Four stolid peons, unarmed save for the inevitable machetes, shuffled in the lead, followed closely by their master, Pablo Benito. A few paces to the rear walked Hard Hart and Jean Rogers.

It was a slightly unusual procession for that road. First, there were no carts; the pair of North Americans possessed nothing with which to fill a cart. Second, Benito himself traveled the trail instead of sending his drovers and remaining at his *rancho* to count and recount his customary toll. Third, the gun-bearing members of the party journeyed in the rear.

Benito carried his short but large-bored carbine, and the man and the girl behind him wore cartridge-belts and holstered side-arms. Why the Venezuelan chose to follow his men, instead of leading, was known only to himself. But the reason for the position of the Tiger was made plain when his fair companion complained that the mosquitoes were more numerous there than in the van.

"The little pests come back to us from the men in front," she pointed out, drawing closer her neck-cloth and vigorously swinging the handkerchief before her eyes. "Why shouldn't we take the lead?"

"Because then we'd be breaking the First Commandment." His blue eyes twinkled at her. " 'Thou shalt let no armed man walk behind thee.' "

A quick glance, a lifting of the brows, and she studied the shuffling men ahead.

"But—but these men must be all right," she protested. "They have nothing to gain and much to lose by——"

She left the sentence unfinished.

"So far as we know," he nodded. "But maybe we don't know everything. And it's never a mistake to obey the Commandments down here. There are only two of them, you know. The other one is: 'Thou shalt never be caught with thy gun empty.' "

A smile of understanding answered. It quickly faded, though, and the little jaw grew a shade more resolute. They plodded on for some distance before she spoke again.

"Oh, won't it be wonderful to be out of this!" she exclaimed impulsively. "Out on the deep blue sea, where there's never a mosquito—and up home in civilization, where you needn't watch every one for fear of a stab in the back—or worse!"

His own face turned wistful; but he shrugged disagreement.

"The deep blue sea sounds good to me," he admitted. "But about the back-stabbing, I don't know. There are quite a few folks in the noble U. S. A. who will knife you if they get a chance, and some who will go out of their way to make the chance. I've been stabbed in the back more than once up there, and by people who posed as my best friends; that's one reason why I hopped into this place, where a man can fight back with a man's weapons. And don't run off with the idea that all Venezuelans are treacherous. There are plenty of square *hombres* here—though you don't often meet 'em in this up-river section."

"I stand corrected," she replied, with a mock bow. "Except for Ciudad Bolívar, of course, I've seen only this wild river. But——"

"But it's not your kind of a country, and now that your dad's gone you're glad to be getting away from it," he finished. "Of course. Well, it will soon be ended. By the way, when you left your launch at Zamuro did you have plenty of gas in reserve? And did you leave it in the boat?"

"Why—there wasn't much left. You see, we carried enough to bring us to Zamuro, where we knew we'd have to leave the launch until we came back; and dad had arranged to have more brought up by some sailing vessel. But we expected to spend some time in the country above here, so he told the agent not to send it for—I think it was two months. It must be still in Bolívar. There were two or three cans left when I arrived—five-gallon tins—and I left them in the boat, of course."

"M-hm. Pablo!"

"*Sí?*"

"When you went over to take care of the boat of the *señorita*, what did you do with the *gasolina?*"

"I hid it, *señor*, in a certain place among the rocks, out of the sun."

"Where? Behind that tree that twists like a snake?"

"*Sí*. How did you guess it?"

Hart snorted. That natural hiding-place behind the queer tree at Zamuro was known to more than one river-man of this part of the Orinoco.

"You are simple, Pablo. Is not that place used by many men, and is not *gasolina* worth a peso a gallon? You would have done better by leaving it in the boat. Did you hide the boat, as I told you to do?"

"*Sí—sí*—most certainly! It is in a narrow place and covered with palms. Not even *El Diablo* himself could find it!"

The Tiger's face cleared. The only party known to have passed up or down this stretch of the river recently was that of Diego Lopez, which had resumed its journey two days previously; and, with launch and gasoline both hidden from its eyes, that gang probably had remained ignorant of their existence.

"Fifteen gallons of gas, and the current behind us," he mused. "We ought to kick along pretty lively for a while; get her down into safer country, anyhow, before the fuel gives out."

STEADILY they marched ahead, the swiftly rising sun shooting fierce rays down on their peaked sombreros, the insect swarms thickening as the heat increased. The peons, wordless, moved with the bovine gait of the bullocks they were accustomed to drive. Benito drifted on with a nervous shuffle, pausing once to point at the fresh splay-hoofed track of a wandering tapir. The girl swung gracefully along, the grim belt and gun looking incongruous on her slender figure. The lean cripple beside her marched with long but languid strides, keenly watching everything ahead. At times they passed little knots of palms which cast fleeting shadows over their path; but elsewhere the bare knolls and the gravelly ground hurled at them the heat of a breathless furnace. And the really hot hours of the day had not yet arrived.

At length the peons stopped in the shade of a mass of bush. Benito, too, sat down on a black stone and mopped his leathery face. Puzzled, Jean stared about at a jumble of grotesque sooty boulders, ragged clumps of brush, and a few warped trees.

"What are we stopping for?" she wondered.

"We've arrived," grinned Hart. "Don't you recognize the bustling port of Zamuro? There's a delegation of the citizens."

His pointing finger designated a dozen black *zamuros*, resting in a withered tree and watching them with the ghoulish gaze of their kind.

"You're joking!"

"Not at all. This is it. Guess you didn't observe things closely when you left here. This is the port of Zamuro, inhabited only by *zamuros*—hence the name."

Still incredulous, she moved forward a couple of rods; then stopped with a little cry. She stood now at the edge of a bank, and below her lay water, stretching away among inky stones to the left.

"Why, it's—it is! I'm no explorer, I'm afraid—I'm lost in a place where I've been before."

"You're not the first one to do that. Pablo! Get the boat."

"*Sí, señor.*"

Commands tumbled from his mouth. The peons moved away, swinging off in a circuit of other watery depressions.

"And I myself will find the *gasolina*," he announced.

He detoured a small chaos of boulders and walked toward another rock-heap whence rose a serpentine tree. Startled curses broke from him.

"The rocks have been moved!" he yelped. "I put small ones on top—they are thrown down! And—ah, *Madre de Dios!*—the cans are gone!"

With a growl, Hart swung after him. It was true enough. The cache had been looted.

"Gregorio!" bawled Benito. "The *lancha*—is it there? Answer me! *Pronto!*"

A moment's silence. Then came the voice of a peon.

"*Sí. Est' aquí.* It is here."

"*Valgame Dios!* That is good!" Benito sighed in relief. "But the *gasolina*—who could have taken it?"

"Who?" snarled the Tiger. "That sneak-thief of a Diego! Who else? You fool! You have the brains of a sloth! You leave here fifteen pesos, for any man to pick up. And——"

His teeth clicked shut. Was fifteen pesos all that actuated Diego to cripple the gas-boat? Was there not some other motive? He glanced at the *señorita* whom Diego had so boldly admired.

Then he switched his gaze and forced his mind to consider facts instead of suspicions. They had a boat, but no power, unless some fuel remained in the tank. The nearest place where gasoline could be obtained was Caicara. The new revolution, with its accompanying lawlessness and rapine, was about to break out all along the river between here and Caicara. And Caicara was two hundred miles away.

VII

SLUGGISHLY, yet steadily, a launch with a dead engine cruised down the tawny Orinoco.

Forward, just within the shadow of a low awning, Pablo Benito stood conning the treacherous rock-studded stream. Aft, his one hand resting on the little rear steering-wheel, Hart watched the pilot and the crew. Beside him, looking dreamily at some thing far away, sat the girl for whom all these men were making the journey down this wicked river.

The motive power of the heavy craft was a double set of crude oars, cut and shaped by the machetes of the peons who now wielded them. The river itself, rising and gaining force from the rains already raging in the distant mountains—though the wet season had not yet advanced to the master stream—was shoving the boat northward at the rate of four miles an hour. The oars added another mile or two, giving steerage-way. So, despite the theft of the cached cans, the man and the girl from the land beyond the Spanish Main were steadily creeping nearer to their own world.

The thoughts of three of the voyagers, however, far outstripped the speed of their actual progress. If the peons possessed such things as thoughts, their expressionless faces gave no sign of them. But Benito, even while concentrating his attention on the visible rocks and the surface boils betokening submerged ones, was visioning the Banco de Venezuela, in Ciudad Bolívar, and himself receiving there many pesos from the little *señorita*.

The *señorita* herself was looking even farther away: seeing the sapphire waves of the Caribbean, the silvery flying-fish leaping athwart the ocean hollows—and, perhaps, lounging beside her at the steamer's rail, a tall tiger-man, clothed in the habiliments of civilization and at last divorced from his guns. But El Tigre, though his gaze and his thoughts were ahead, was still living in the lawless land of the bullet and the knife. And the narrowing of his eyes and the crease between them were not caused altogether by the sun-glare on the water.

The boat was nearing a section of the river whose safe passage would much lighten his heart. It now was some forty miles from Zamuro, and, aside from the ever-present risk of striking a submerged rock and perishing in the rending jaws of crocodiles, no danger had been encountered. But ahead waited the malevolent Raudal de San Borje, among whose grim black boulders, seething cross-currents and sucking whirlpools many a floating craft had been wrecked and many a man been gulped down into murderous depths.

And only a few miles below that death-hole lay Puerto Carreño; ordinarily an insignificant settlement comprising a few mean huts, dominated by a great bare rock behind; yet now a menace as merciless as the *raudal*—the rendezvous not only of real revolutionists, embittered by governmental wrongs, but also of the deadly outcasts inevitably attracted to the standard of revolt by the prospect of license, lust, and loot.

There, awhile ago, Hart had been regarded with respect and more than a little fear. But now that he was merely a lone white man, with no power left save that of one gun—it might be otherwise. For himself he had little concern; a fighting finish against odds seemed a fitting end to his career. It was the thought of what might come to the girl afterward that bit the scowl deeper into his forehead.

"I'd give a gold double-eagle—if I had it—to know where that skunk of a Lopez is now and what he's up to," he meditated. "If he went right on down-river, well and good. I'll meet him sometime and take the price of that gas out of his greasy hide—with interest. But if he stopped off at Puerto Carreño—well, we'll see. Good thing he didn't locate this boat, anyhow. He'd have taken it—or, more likely, ruined it, since he wouldn't know how to operate the engine."

Benito, without glancing back, shoved a signaling hand outward to the right. Hart responded with a turn of the wheel. The boat's bow slowly swung northwestward, and another lurking rock was evaded.

"And it's a good thing that you, Pablo, don't know any revolution is brewing," the steersman silently added. "You'd never come down the river if you did—not even with my gun in your ribs; and we need your eye on these waters. You'll lose all your cattle while you're gone. If I didn't know you'd double-cross me for twenty cents I might feel sorry for you, you poor fish."

Aloud he said:

"We are nearing San Borje, Pablo. We must have better speed for good steering."

"It is not quite time," the look-out declared. And the boat slid at the same rate, the mid-stream silence broken only by the recurrent squeak of the oars.

Another half-mile of uninhabited shore crawled away behind. The labyrinth of San Borje rocks loomed larger and larger ahead. Then Benito's voice snapped in urgent command.

"*Adelante! Tira avante! Pronto!* Pull ahead! Fast!"

The peons heaved hard. The boat surged faster. With quickened strokes the clumsy oars swung, and with redoubled power they tugged at the water. The wheel began to fight the grip of the Tiger, who tensed, watching Benito's every motion. Around the speeding craft the yellow surface was becoming a field of swirls and boils.

Jean came to herself with a start. One glance around, another at the white-knuckled hand gripping the wheel—then she closed both her own hands beside his.

"Let go!" he commanded. "You'll only hinder."

"You're not so strong as you were," she quietly reminded. "I'll follow your moves."

His mouth hardened. This was the first time he had had to meet a two-handed situation without the two hands, and his crippled condition maddened him. But there was no time to argue. They were in the *raudal*.

"Left!" shrieked Benito. "To the left, *por amor de Dios!*"

The three hands forced the wheel over.

"Too much! A little to the right! Hold!"

A hissing snarl of water to the right—a gruesome gurgle to the left—the sounds dropped behind. An oar bumped and rebounded from something below the surface; its mate crashed against it; two peons staggered and stumbled. The boat yawed.

Benito screeched a curse. Hart heaved at the wheel. The bow swung again. The peons, their blank faces at last alive with excitement, caught their footing and their stroke. The boat steadied, rushing on.

"Ah, *caramba*, what clumsy fools—" began Benito.

"Shut up!" roared the Tiger. "Watch your course!"

"*Sí*—to the right again—hard! Hard!"

The two little hands proved their worth now, fighting the wheel down while the big fist reached for a new grip. A rock grazed the bottom with an ominous bump; a series of roaring yellow-white waves snatched at the side and fell short. A foot farther to the left, and the boat would have been crushed and all aboard hurled into that raving maw.

Yelling, swearing, praying to God to spare him and to the Tiger to obey his commands, Benito continued to howl directions from the bow. Sweating and heaving, the peons dragged their oars fore and aft. Crouching as if fighting a human foe, Hart wrestled with the rudder. And Jean, watching the seamed face above her and moving as he moved, aided his combat as if one mind, one instinct, controlled all three of the guiding hands.

Rock after rock, wave after wave, current and eddy and hole, was dodged or met and mastered. At length Benito threw both arms wide and turned, his pallid face split by a grin.

"*Valgame Dios*, it is over! We are through!" he exulted.

The rowers slumped forward, resting on their oars. Hart relaxed, and his iron jaw softened.

"You are a pilot, Pablo," he said.

"*Caramba*, I think so!" cackled the cattleman, mopping his face.

"But without you, little woman," the Tiger added quietly in English, "I think we'd have been in the soup. I've sort of lost my grip."

The small hands slipped to the big one and closed briefly upon it.

"You'll get it back," she asserted. "And you're all right! Almost any man can handle himself when he has all his strength, but it takes a regular fellow to carry on when he's out of luck."

With that she moved back to her previous place. He smiled a little at her man-talk, but his gaze went to his fingers curled over the wheel, and his mouth grew harsh. It still was one of the most formidable gunhands in Venezuela, that sinewy right fist; but it had almost failed him now in a fight with—water; nothing but water. As he once more gazed along the river his eyes were not pleasant to look at.

VIII

WITH smooth water once more around and no dangerous rocks immediately ahead, the boat drifted during a few minutes of rest. Then Pablo, after squinting at the westering sun and spying a deserted hut some distance downstream, suggested—

"That *sitio* down yonder will be a good sleeping-place, *señor*."

Hart's eyes dwelt on his a moment; then roved past him to the hut, and beyond the hut to the next blind curve of the river.

"We camp tonight," he said deliberately, "below the Rio Meta."

"*Como? Caramba!*" exclaimed the other, while even the peons stared in amazement. "Below the Meta? Below Puerto Carreño? But that is more than five leagues! In another hour it will be night, and we cannot travel in the night. It is not done."

"It will have to be done!"

Benito stared again into the hard blue eyes; scratched his bristly chin; muttered to himself:

"*Diablo! Es loco!* He is crazy!"

But he did not speak that thought aloud. Instead, he attempted politely to reason with the madman.

"But *señor*—of course you know best, but—it is already a day, and these *muchachos* must rest. And the *señorita*—it is not right to endanger her so. Below the Meta is the Raudal de Cariben, *señor*, as you know; and if we travel by dark—*caramba*, we cannot even find the Meta in the dark! We shall blunder into the *raudal*, and that is no place to travel by night. *Valgame Dios*, no!"

The peons grunted agreement. Even Jean looked oddly at her countryman.

"It shall be done as I say!"

The fierce growl sent a chill up the spines of Pablo and his men. So did the hovering of the deadly right hand near the holster. Hart was now El Tigre, before whom stronger men than these five had quailed.

"*Sí—sí*—as you will, *capitán!*" tumbled from Benito's mouth. "We shall camp below the Meta. *Muchachos*, to work!"

The goose-fleshed men began wearily dragging again at the oars. Benito turned his face forward, silently cursing El Tigre and wishing he would drop dead. Jean still looked inquiringly at the menacing man-driver. His gaze strayed to her.

"It's this way," he explained. "We'd better pass—a certain place down here—without being seen. Darkness will be all the better. We can hit the Meta all right, and tie up there until daybreak lets us shoot the *raudal*. I'm not ready yet to let these fellows know it, but there's going to be a rev—" He bit the word off short; it was too similar to the Spanish "*revolución*" to be spoken just then. "A rebellion," he dodged. "And just now this particular strip of river isn't a good place for us to be seen."

She nodded, though she seemed undisturbed. Reaching under the seat, she lifted a small box; and from it she took a roll of red-and-white cloth which she deftly shook out.

"We might raise this," she mused, stroking it caressingly.

"Hm! The flag!"

His eyes fastened hungrily on the brilliant stars and stripes. Watching him, she smiled a little.

"Yes. They wouldn't fire on the American flag, would they?"

"They might. Depends on who's there now. If certain men of my acquaintance—real revolutionists—were there with their forces, they'd be more likely to salute it than to shoot it. And they'd treat you right. But I think it's too early for them, and that the gangs there now are riff-raff who don't respect anything but lead."

"But you're known to them, aren't you?"

"Hm! Yes. Only too well. For once, I'm playing safe."

Again she nodded, and this time her face showed concern. Soberly she studied the sullen rowers and the back of the bowman, whose intent pose betrayed his straining effort to overhear some illuminating word from the stern.

"Are you sure these men don't know of what is coming?" she asked. "And shouldn't they be told now?"

"Yes and no. I'm positive they don't know yet, because that very point was taken up at the conference I attended awhile ago. Oh, yes, I was in on the game, though I'm out of it now—worse luck! Well, some previous uprisings have been knocked in the head by too much talk beforehand; and since our noble pilot here has a loose tongue and sees everybody traveling beyond Zamuro, he's being kept ignorant. As for telling him now—hardly! If we pass unchallenged I doubt if I'll tell him at all. He always looks out for his own hide. We'll look out for ours."

Slowly the boat crawled on. Shadows lengthened athwart the stream. From the shore trees rolled the raucous roar of a howling monkey, and in the nearer air squawked the harsh-voiced *guacharaca* birds, wheeling on fleet wings and watching the sluggish launch.

The abandoned *sitio* where Pablo had meant to sleep was passed without a word. The next curve advanced slowly toward them, received them, turned them in a new direction, and let them go. The last hot glare of the low sun broiled the left sides of boat and passengers. Then it was gone, and in the wondrously blue sky floated only fiery red clouds at the west, rose-and-lavender ones in the zenith, and dull blue-gray ones to eastward. Swiftly the glow faded, the blue deepened, and the first star twinkled out.

"Pablo," spoke Hart, who had been studying the old water-marks along shore.

"*Sí?*"

"The water is high enough to pass around the island opposite Puerto Carreño?"

The unskilled pilot squinted at the nearest shore boulder, measuring the space between mud-streaks.

"I think so," he assented. "It is rising all the time. The shore channel must now be quite deep at that place."

"*Bueno*. We shall go behind the island. The stars will give enough light. Below the island we travel near the east bank."

Benito, still facing down-stream, screwed up one eye as he probed this plan. Such a course was an obvious endeavor to avoid Puerto Carreño. Puerto Carreño was the nearest settlement to the Meta. The Meta was the great flowing highway from Colombia, down which traveled desperate characters: bandits, fleeing murderers, and at times—revolutionists!

"*Madre de Dios!*" He jerked about as if kicked. "Is there a new——"

"Silence!" spat Hart. "Keep your mouth shut and obey!"

Benito's mouth opened and closed twice. With a worried scowl he turned back to his lookout work, seeing the darkening river not at all. There was a new revolution! And he was many miles away from his *rancho*—below the Raudal de San Borje—in a dead boat—in the power of that demon of a Tiger! He would lose all his cattle! If the rebels met him he might even be shot! If he dared to oppose this diabolical El Tigre he surely would be shot! Ah, *caramba*, what a vile, tricky, infernal beast was this Tiger, to drag an honest man into such a trap!

The fact that he himself had been slyly calculating his chances of selling El Tigre to the first federal garrison they might encounter did not recur to him. Besides, that would be only doing his duty to the republic, at a little profit. For that same Tiger to hoodwink Pablo Benito was a most villainous crime. Not even the golden vision of the waiting Banco de Venezuela cheered him. He might not live to arrive there!

But as the night thickened and the probability of passing the danger-point unseen grew larger in his mind, Pablo became more calm. After all, the revolution had not yet broken out—he would have heard of it. And if his cattle were lost, he would find some way to make these *Norte Americanos* pay for them. They had taken him away from his *rancho*—they must pay the damages, *caramba!*

So now the thing to do was to sneak himself and his men and his golden goose of a *señorita* past Puerto Carreño. *Bueno!* That was easy. Had he not brought the boat through that deadly San Borje? Even El Tigre had admitted his smartness. And now he would run under the noses of the lurking rebels and laugh at them. He was too sly for them to catch.

At length the island loomed ahead. Pablo hissed orders to his peons: they must row silently now. To Hart, watching keenly, he gave no instructions; for the steersman already was swinging the boat. Under the stars, now faintly lighting the waterway, they floated behind the black island and stealthily slid down the curving by-channel.

No voice, no splash, no light, came to them from the inky banks on either side. Gradually they traveled down the whole length of the island, and still the silence and the darkness were unbroken. The last trees on their left faded away, and they peered across the Orinoco at the lights of Puerto Carreño.

Those lights were too numerous for normal times. Fires blazed and lanterns moved. Men were camping there—far too many men to be mere river travelers. But there seemed to be no boats out on the water, and those lights were nearly a mile away, casting no beams on the launch. The voyagers could pass easily, and by moonrise they would be——

"*Alto!*" barked a voice. "*Quién vive?*"

The military demand snapped from the east bank, only a few rods away. In the ensuing tense silence aboard the boat all heard movements of invisible men and the faint clicks of gun-locks.

"Halt!" rang the voice again. "Halt or die!"

"——!" hissed Pablo. "We are caught!"

IX

AT THE sharp command from the darkness, the rowers had halted their strokes as if smitten by paralysis. The boat at once lost headway. Now a flash leaped from the black bush and the launch quivered from the impact of a heavy bullet.

"That for a warning!" called the voice. "The next ones will rake you. Back your oars!"

The scared peons obeyed in blundering haste. Their oars clashed against one another, splashed in blind back-strokes, rocking the boat and destroying control. Pablo howled a medley of senseless orders and fragmentary prayers. Hart, struggling to maintain his balance in the reeling craft, exploded into curses on the men afloat and those ashore.

"You, there, you misborn son of a jackass!" he yelled at the bush. "Fire again and I will blow your bowels out through your back! I am El Tigre!"

"*Sí?*" The voice did not sound surprized. "Give the sign."

"*Libertad.*"

"*Libertad y justicia.* Liberty and justice," acknowledged the other. "You should have spoken sooner. Hold your boat. We have a word for you."

Hart listened hard as commands were spoken. Men were ordered to move outward; others to hold their positions. Evidently the ambushed force was strong enough to make resistance hopeless. Moreover, it was absolutely invisible, while the launch was sufficiently plain to form an unmistakable target. Sourly he compelled the oarsmen to bring the boat about and hold her bow on to the current.

From the murk alongshore slid a canoe in which rifle-barrels glinted under the starlight.

"Who comes?" demanded the Tiger.

"Otón Polanco, *teniente* of Arebalo," was the cool answer from the dug-out.

"Arebalo?" ejaculated Hart. "He is here?"

"*Sí.* We came two days ago. Our camp is behind the big black *roca*, beyond Carreño. The general will talk with you. Go across the river. We shall escort you."

The canoe swung alongside, aligning itself with the launch, its men peering sharply across the few feet of intervening water. The Tiger peered as sharply back at them.

"How comes Arebalo here, lieutenant?" he queried dubiously. "He was not to operate at the Meta, but northward."

A grin gleamed across the indistinct face of the rebel in command.

"*Como?* Have you not learned that our general always operates where he is not expected?" he rebuked.

"True enough." Hart relaxed. "So the movement in the north was only a blind. *Bueno!* I shall be much pleased to meet the general."

"*Sí,*" chimed in Pablo, his voice much relieved. "And I too. He is a *buen hombre*, the General Arebalo. *Vamos, muchachos!*"

The rowers gave way. The Tiger lifted his hand from his holster and resumed steering. The bow swung toward the up-stream limit of the lights, and the launch slowly forged across the current, flanked by the dug-out.

"You keep sharp watch, *teniente,*" Hart called. "Did you stop Diego Lopez also?"

"Diego Lopez? Who is he?"

"Of San Fernando. In a *piragua.* Two days ago."

"Ah, two days ago. I have had this guard here only since one day ago. I know nothing of such a man."

"Hm! No chance of getting back our gas, apparently," Hart murmured to the tense girl beside him. "But we're not so badly out of luck. Arebalo's all right. He may even give us an escort of rebels to take us to the federals. It would be just like him."

"Who is he?" she asked.

"Arebalo Diaz, the cleverest daredevil in the revolutionary game hereabouts—and a gentleman. Used to be a big cattle-owner, I've heard, and was framed up and ruined by some governor up north about eight years ago. Since then he's fought the government from pure hatred; campaigned all over Venezuela, attacked all kinds of federal forces, licked them to a frazzle half the time and scared them green in the face the other half. He doesn't fight for loot, like most of these self-styled revolutionists; his only use for money is for alms or to give it to the poor. When he's captured a town he takes all the weapons and all the federal funds, boots the officials out and tells 'em to keep running, frees all the poor beasts in the jails, and then moves on. You notice that his men speak of him by his first name. They love the earth he walks on."

"He must be a sort of Robin Hood."

"Something like that. I've never seen him—he fights mostly in the north, where there are more towns; but I'm not half sorry to meet him just now. For one thing, he's said to have a great liking for the United States."

"Yes? That may be very useful."

She looked down again at the red-and-white cloth. Then, with a mischievous side-glance, she added:

"What an interesting man he must be—a man whom every one loves! It's a shame that I look such a fright."

"Tough luck," he agreed dryly. "However, I think he'll bear up nobly under the infliction."

"You brute!" she laughed. "It will be rather nice to hear a few flowery Spanish compliments from the general, after your refusal to be gallant. Perhaps I'll fall in love with him like every one else. Who knows?"

"Better not." His tone hardened. She laughed again.

"There's not much danger of that."

She watched him a moment longer, and then turned smiling eyes toward the approaching lights. The swash of the oars, the dull thump of paddle-shafts along the canoe gunwales, measured the gradual progress of the captors and the captured. The settlement grew larger, and against the fireglow the black forms of men became distinct.

"*Alerte!* Who comes?" rang a hail from the Colombian shore.

"Otón and El Tigre," called the lieutenant. There was no further challenge.

At length, at the northernmost point of the settlement—for the current had borne them somewhat downward in the crossing—they grounded. Armed men, their faces shadowy against the lights, seized the boats and held them firm. Others, in disorderly groups, came swinging down the sloping shore. There was a reckless swagger in their gait, a rough timbre in their voices, that made Hart scowl and reach toward his holster.

"These are not your men, *teniente?*" he demanded.

"Ah, no," was the easy reply. "They are those who wait on the river side. Our camp is where I have told you. Come."

"Tell this gang to get back, then," growled the Tiger, eyeing the huge black rock looming vaguely behind the town. "Is Arebalo camping without fires? No light shows behind the *roca.*"

"Without fires—after dark," assented the other.

He glanced toward the advancing men, but gave them no command to halt. Hart growled again as he stepped over the side. His gun now was loosened in its sheath and gripped in a tense hand.

"*Alto!*" he snapped.

The newcomers slowed. Only one, a burly fellow carrying a lantern, came straight on. On him the Tiger's eyes were fixed. Half-crouching, he waited.

"Who are you?" he snapped. "Did you not hear me?"

Still the man gave no sign of hearing. Up to the Tiger he came defiantly before he stopped. Behind him another man edged forward. The lieutenant and those around the boats moved imperceptibly nearer.

The lantern was lifted. Its light illumined the faces of Hart and the other man. That other face was red from sun and drink; a heavy-jawed, hard-eyed, stubby-bearded, lowering countenance which now stretched in a menacing grin.

"Yeah, by ——, it's Hard Hart!" the newcomer raucously exulted. "Hard Hart, the cold-blooded —— I been lookin' for ever since the armistice! Ha, ha, ha! Guess ye ain't forgot Bull Kelly, hey, Hart? Sergeant Willyum Kelly o' B Company, —— ye! Ye broke me once, but it's my turn now, hey? Cap'n Hart! Blah-blah! Ye're a no-good down-an'-out now, hey? Ha, ha, ha, *ho!*"

Hart, iron-featured, gazed slit-eyed at the malignant Nemesis which had sprung from his past.

"So it's you, Kelly, you yellow-livered thief!" he grated. "Hanging out now with the scum of South America, are you? You're in the right company at last—among a pack of half-breeds! You're no white man. You're a disgrace to the Irish father that gave you a name. I'm —— glad I broke you, and now I'll break you again so you'll stay broke! Draw, you sneak-thief! Draw!"

Kelly, with a grunt of rage, dropped the lantern and reached toward his own six-gun. But behind him rose a sudden piercing yell in Spanish that slowed his hand.

"No! The *señorita!* You may hit her! Do not shoot—*Santa Maria,* not yet! Wait until I take her—then kill him!"

The creeping man behind Kelly was jumping forward. The Tiger's gun leaped out.

"Back, you snake!" he shouted. "Pablo—Jean—push out and away! It's a trap—I'll hold them——"

Kelly sprang at him. Yells—oaths—blows sounded at the launch. A sudden stunning shock smote the Tiger's head from behind. He staggered and nearly fell. His gun-hand mechanically began firing.

In a whirling chaos of lights, men, stars and gunshots he reeled, snarling, sobbing, fighting desperately against engulfing oblivion. His gun spat again—again—again—clicked uselessly. He was hurled down. A rifle-barrel fell again on his head. Then—blackness.

X

FIRES and faces wavered before the returning vision of El Tigre. They were unreal things which refused to remain in place: fires which whirled dizzily about him, faces which leered and blurred into new ones: sly faces, bold faces, venomous faces, but all alike in one feature—the reckless expression stamped on them by years of outlawry and wild living. From somewhere sounded a mocking voice relating a joke.

"And I said, 'I am Otón Polanco, *teniente* of Arebalo.' And the fool—the Tigre so wise and cunning—*por Dios,* he believed it!

And he asked where was Arebalo, and I said our general—*our* general, ha, ha!—was behind the *roca* yonder. And he said he would be glad to meet Arebalo—*caramba*, yes, he did—and he came like a sheep. And on the way he was telling his *señorita* what a great man was Arebalo—he did not know that I understand the English. Ha, ha, ha! And listen—this is too good—she said she would love Arebalo—*sí*, so she did—and El Tigre growled as if he would bite! Ah, ha, ha!"

A hoarse chorus of laughter made Hart writhe—but only mentally. His body seemed paralyzed, his brain still only half clear. The fires were growing dim.

"And Arebalo four hundred miles away!" chuckled another voice. "Why should Arebalo come to the Meta, when he can find good fighting in Guarico? The *señorita* must travel far if she would love him so that he will know it. And what is the good of loving at a distance?"

"That is not your way, Pancho," twitted a third. More rough mirth followed. "Tell me, what did you do with that last woman of yours when you tired of her?"

"I choked her. She kept blubbering because I had shot her husband——"

The dimness overpowered Hart. He slipped into nowhere.

After a time the fires reappeared. Now they stood steady. The swarthy faces, too, moved naturally or remained in one place, the eyes centering on something beyond. Another voice was speaking: a low, steady voice ice-edged with contempt: the voice of a woman.

"And you were born in America, I suppose," it said. "You went to American schools, grew up under the protection of the American flag, called yourself an American and a white man. And you went to France to fight for America—or didn't you? I guess you didn't. I guess you were kicked into the army, and went over because you weren't even man enough to be a real slacker! And yet you became a sergeant? I can't believe it—unless it was in a noncombatant unit of some kind. You hulking coward——"

"That'll be about all from you, me lady!" an ugly growl broke in. "Talk civil or shut up! Don't think because ye're a woman ye can pull that kind o' stuff! It don't go!"

Hart rolled his head and looked toward the voices. He was lying on the hard-packed clay of the one street of Puerto Carreño. Camp-fires burned along the way, their flickering lights disclosing yellow palm walls of huts and yellow faces of lounging men. Beside the nearest fire, some four yards away, stood Kelly and Jean: the man's red visage glowering down at her, the girl's scornful gaze unswerving. Near them, on the ground, lay two motionless men. Beyond, Pablo Benito and his peons squatted glumly, backed and flanked by a disorderly array of human beasts of prey.

"Coward!" she taunted. "A mouth-fighter—that's all you are! You have to have all your gang behind you before you can capture one white man—and he a cripple! You have to disarm a white woman before you dare stand and talk to her! And then—*then*, with the crippled man struck down from behind—then how brave you are! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Her laughter cut like a whiplash. Kelly's face bloated and blackened with rage. The men beyond—few able to understand her English words, but all reading her mocking voice and attitude—nudged one another and grinned slyly, appreciating the scene just as they would have enjoyed the baiting of a bull. Hart reached for his belt—found himself weaponless—and lurched suddenly to his feet, fiercely tearing apart his shirt and sling to free the left arm. It still was practically useless, that wounded limb, but he would make it work if he could.

Instantly Kelly wheeled, thick fingers twitching. Toward him walked Hart, dizzy again from the fierce blows which had downed him, swaying on uncertain feet.

"Yah! Come to life, did ye?" Kelly spoke in savage satisfaction. "About time! I got somethin' for ye—been savin' it for years—now come and git it!"

His heavy fists rose. Head forward and jaw out, he strode vengefully at the groggy victim of his long-nourished hatred.

"So that's it? Bare hands?" jeered Hart. "Booze makes you almost human——"

Without the slightest preliminary movement he straightened toward the protruding jaw. Fist, arm, body and left leg formed one line, and the terrific punch came clear from his toes. It landed with a crack like that of a cleaver on a side of beef. Kelly lengthened backward and hit the ground with a thump.

But, as he fell, his own right fist crunched into Hart's lower ribs with a sickening jolt. The Tiger, who had thrown every ounce of power into that one blow, reeled, gasped, and toppled aside. For a second both men lay still. The outlaws stood petrified.

"——!" came an awed voice. "El Tigre still has his tricks of the cat! What a smash on the jaw of 'El Toro'!"

El Toro—the Bull—evidently thought so himself, if capable of thinking just then. Feebly he sat up, his right hand dropping instinctively to his revolver, his left pawing before his face as if to brush away a dense fog. His body swayed as if about to topple back. From his split chin dripped blood.

Hart, watching as he gasped for breath, grinned ferociously. He squirmed over, rose to hands and knees, shambled forward. Still on his knees, he threw himself at his enemy's right side, clutching at the revolver.

With a hoarse grunt Kelly acknowledged the attack and swung his groping left arm around the other's body. With both right fists clenched around the same gun, the two flopped about the ground, fighting with knees and feet.

The murderous band around them closed in.

"Kill the —— -tiger!" yelled a rough voice.

"No! Do not spoil the fight!" shouted a dozen others. "It is too good! Wait!"

Jean Rogers, apparently frozen, suddenly flashed into life. With a bound she was at the nearest bandit, snatching for his rifle. She almost wrenched it from him. But the man's hard hand shut just in time. In the same instant another evil-featured brute tore her away and held her powerless.

"Not so fast, my beauty!" he grinned, leering at her. "Perhaps you may shoot El Toro later—but not now. Be still, you tiger's pet!"

Straining, yanking, she found his grip unyielding as iron. Perforce she quieted and waited.

Under the stress of rough-and-tumble combat, Kelly's sight and strength came back to him. The fury of his resistance redoubled. He could not draw his gun—he had all he could do to keep Hard Hart from breaking his hold on its butt—but he could, and did, battle savagely with his left fist. His blows seemingly had no effect whatever. Then he gave up battering and tried for a throat-grip.

The Tiger snapped like the fanged animal whose name he bore. The vindictive hand searching for his jugular jerked sharply back. Kelly, the Bull, roared with pain. Hard Hart's teeth were buried in the base of his thumb—buried to the bone.

Slowly, with terrible effort, they heaved each other over twice, grappling in a futile clinch. The two right hands still gripped the gun, neither able to wrest it from the other. Kelly's left hand was caught in jaws as rigid as those of a steel trap. Their legs were interlocked. Neither could further damage his opponent. Now was the time for the Bull to yell for help from the tense brutes around him.

But he did not. Panting, he spoke to his antagonist.

"Lay off, ye fightin' fool!" he grunted. "Ye can't git the gun. Leggo! Call it a draw—for now. These here gorillas will croak the both of us unless we break."

Still holding his grips, Hart flicked a glance around; saw the death-lust in the vulpine faces; saw Jean in the hold of the ruffian who had seized her. For another instant he plumbed Kelly's bloodshot eyes for treacherous intent—and found none. Forthwith he loosed his jaws and tentatively relaxed his hand. At once Kelly's gun-hand rose with his, leaving the weapon undrawn.

"Up together!" breathed Hart.

With a simultaneous scramble and spring, they shot to full height and fronted the swarthy pack—two grisly warriors who seemed suddenly to have become partners united against an alien foe. So swift was the unexpected movement, so terrifying the aspect of the Tiger and the Bull, that the crowding figures fell back.

El Tigre took one step toward the man holding the girl. That man hastily loosed her and retreated, defensively reaching for the hilt of his machete. Jean sprang toward Hart, who stopped, glowering at the fellow. At that moment Kelly bellowed at the rest.

"Get back to your quarters!" he roared in bad Spanish, eying them balefully. "Who told you to crowd in here? Move, before I send some of you to the ——!"

His hand was again on his gun, and his blood-stained visage was frightful.

In all that godless gang not a man retorted or stood fast. The ragged figures drew away and shuffled off toward their respective fires, only a subdued hissing of oaths bespeaking their resentment. There remained only a half-score of heavily armed men who looked somewhat less criminal than the rest. They seemed to await further orders.

"Ye low-lived cutthroats, ye!" muttered Kelly.

With this benediction on his followers he turned toward Hart. For a moment the two glared at each other. Then, though eye and voice spoke undiminished hostility, Kelly's tone held a note of grudging respect.

"Git into this here shack and stay there till mornin'. Don't try no monkey games, neither, or these here tough eggs'll drill ye. Git me? I'll tend to ye tomorrer. Right now I got somethin' else on me hands. And ye've done 'nough scrappin' for one night, ye hard-boiled ——, with croakin' them two guys and tryin' to do up Bull Kelly."

As he concluded, he jerked a thumb toward the two still forms on the ground. Without another word he strode away. The armed men, unspeaking, moved toward the prisoners. With a shrug, Hart stepped wearily toward the hut designated by his captor.

On his way he paused and peered down at the bodies of the men whom, Kelly said, he had killed: men shot in his blind fight at the launch. Resuming his course, he smiled grimly. In coming to Puerto Carreño he had squared an account.

One of the dead—a lank, loose-lipped creature—he did not know. But the other was he who had sneaked forward behind Kelly at the water-side; he who had yelled that the *señorita* was in danger, and whose presence here explained the setting of the trap across the river. With a hole in his breast and another in his forehead, Diego Lopez would steal no more gasoline.

XI

IN THE hut assigned as their prison for the night, the trapped pair peered swiftly around in search of possible weapons: for the hammocks and various other articles strewn about showed it to be in use. But no gun or knife remained in it. Glancing back at the doorway, Hart found a sardonic smile on the face of the man who seemed to be in command of the guards.

"No arms are there, Tigre," the fellow said. "You must think us fools. Go to sleep and try no tricks. We surround you."

"I looked for food and water, not arms," Hart denied. "We have hunger. Let them be brought!"

The other considered, his gaze going to the girl. Then he nodded.

"That is only fair," he admitted. "Arnaldo and Farruco, fetch food from the *lancha* of these people, if there is any. If there is none, get something elsewhere. And water also."

"*Gracias, compañero,*" Hart acknowledged. "Thanks, comrade. And have you tobacco?"

"*Sí.*"

Warily watching him, the other deftly made a cigaret from tobacco shreds and *tabari* bark, and passed it over; rolled another for himself, lighted it, and tendered the match—with his left hand. The right hovered near his belt.

"Do not fear," said the Tiger, smiling grimly. "I fight no more tonight."

"You had best not," was the retort. "But you are too tricky to be trusted. I saw you hit El Toro—*caramba*, what a blow! If he were not as tough as a tapir it would have killed him. Tell me, what is between you two? You are old enemies, yes?"

"He is my enemy," qualified Hart, blowing a smoke-ring. "I thought so little of him that I had forgotten him. We were in the American army, and he stole from French peasants. So I punished him."

"Is that all?" The other looked incredulous. "He did nothing but steal? *Por Dios!* All the world steals."

The blue-eyed man chuckled.

"In one way or another, most of the world does," he assented. "But one must not be caught at it. Kelly—El Toro—was caught."

"Ah, of course, that is different. Yet that must have been a queer army of yours, if men were not allowed to take what they could get."

The listening bandits grouped near him profanely agreed. The Tiger laughed again. Then he took a turn at questioning:

"What is El Toro here? He seems to command. Are you all his men?"

"Ah, no. But we who fight with him are the strongest band now here, so that the others walk wide of us. We are of Colombia, and have come down the Meta because we heard of the coming revolution. El Toro has led us for a year—he came east because he killed a town official in a duel in the gold country, and the greater officials sought his head. He is the very —— of a fighter—no man has ever done to him what you did tonight. And with a gun—*caramba*, he never misses!"

"That is nothing. We *Norte Americanos* always hit—unless we cannot see," the Tiger casually informed him. "Who was it that struck me on the head at the boat?"

"That was Otón, who brought you across. He is sharp, that Otón. He was once in the federal army of Colombia—a *teniente*—and he now is second in command to El Toro. It was he who thought to make that trap for you across the river, so that you could be stopped if you should try to slip past in the night. He fooled you most neatly, yes?"

Hart shrugged, his expressionless face giving no hint of his inward rage.

"He spoiled my shooting," was all the concession he would make. "But not enough to preserve Diego Lopez and another."

"*Sí*," quickly assented the outlaw, as if seizing a chance to speak of something lurking in the back of his mind. "He was a snake, that Diego—you shot most marvelously well, *señor*—the fat fool thought to get this so-beautiful *señorita*. The pig!"

Then, leaning closer and lowering his tone, he added:

"And now, *amigo mio*—this is a very bad position for the *señorita*—one cannot tell what may happen to her. I can take her to a safe place—I can see that she journeys onward with all protection. Later in the night, when it is more quiet, let her slip away from this house. I will take her away at once. She shall be altogether safe."

Hard Hart's fist shut. The reason for the fellow's friendliness was suddenly clear; and Hart knew exactly how "safe" the *señorita* would be under his "protection." One second more, and the guard would have felt that formidable fist crash under his jaw. But in that one second he started and spun away, shocked by something even more dreaded—his master's voice.

"You slimy eel!" thundered the vulgar Spanish of Bull Kelly. "You plot with the prisoners, huh? You try to make an escape, huh? You lousy ——!"

From beside the hut, where he had evidently been spying for none knew how long, the Bull's burly body sprang like a pouncing jaguar. A blow thudded. The man fell and rolled. Nor did his punishment stop there. Kelly was after him with terrific kicks, fairly lifting his writhing body from the ground with each furious leg-drive. The victim made matters all the worse for himself by attempting defense, first with a revolver, then with a knife. Both were knocked spinning by the vicious feet, which finished their work by a kick in the midriff that left the plotter totally insensible.

The other outlaws watched with cruel grins. As El Toro completed his discipline and turned from the inert figure they chuckled harshly, even as they narrowly eyed Kelly's advance on them. Halting within arm's length, he swept them with a truculent glare.

"Julio, you take charge," he rumbled. "No talking to the prisoners! The next man to try it will be broken in small pieces. Understand?"

"*Sí*," one answered easily. "El Tigre has ordered food and water brought. Is it allowed?"

"*Sí*. Let them eat. But nothing more."

With that he strode to the doorway and confronted Hart.

"Ye heard what I said," he rasped. "Eatin' and sleepin' is yer limit. Don't pull no clever stuff. And say, I wanta tell ye somethin' that don't make no difference now, excep' to show ye where ye git off. That time ye busted me in France and gimme the name of a cheap crook—'twas a frame-up. I never swiped the stuff. The guys that done the job hung it onto me, and they got away with it. Ye soaked me good, didn't ye? Never gimme a chanst, did ye? And now, before I'm done with ye, ye'll know nobody makes a goat o' Bull Kelly without payin' dear."

Hart studied him keenly. The hot eyes, the bitter tone, were those of a man wronged. And, under present circumstances, Kelly could have no object in lying about that bygone affair.

"You made no defense, Kelly," he reminded. "Worse than that, you were insubordinate and insolent. Why didn't you tell this stuff then and square yourself? Sounds pretty fishy."

"Whaddye think I am—a squealer?" flared Kelly. "I didn't have a chanst, and I knowed it. Ye had me judged guilty before I was brought in; I could see it in yer eyes. So I kep' me trap shut—excep' for tellin' ye all to go to ——. And I squared things with two o' them guys that framed me—yeah, I'll say I did! They're in France yet—under ground!"

"Oh!" The Tiger's mouth curled. "Murdered them, eh?"

"Murder nothin'! I got to 'em at Brest, on the way home. Up an alley, it was—with our bayonits. I took 'em both to oncet—two to one, git me? And I done 'em both in. Then I got away quick to alibi meself, and when they was found the p'lice guessed they fit each other to death like the Kilkenny cats. Yeah, I pay me bills in me own way——"

"Corcoran and Heaslip!" the ex-captain broke in. "I remember that Brest incident."

"Corcoran and Heaslip they was. And the other two was Vitelli and Skinner. They croaked before I could git to 'em, so I had to let 'em slide. Vitelli got blowed to pieces by a shell, and Skinner got his eyes shot out, went nuts, and ate the end of his gun. That cleans up the whole lousy lot—all but Hard Hart. And tomorrer night I'll be square with *all* o' them that done me dirt."

The heavy mouth curved in a downward grin.

"Uh-huh," the captive coolly replied. "Bring on any game you like. If you had any sense you'd know that on the showing you made you let yourself in for all you got. But if you want to take it out on me now, all right. What I want to know is this: since when have you been picking on women—American women?"

Kelly scowled.

"When she gits some sense, and talks sense instead o' bawlin' me out, I'll listen to that li'l lady o' yourn. Till then she can lay here."

Two men, approaching with lanterns, drew his eye aside. They were the pair who had gone after food.

They paused beside their commander, who, after surveying their light load of cassava, smoked pork, and water, nodded and grabbed the lantern from the nearer man. With it he stepped into the hut, shoving the Tiger roughly aside and scanning the interior as if to reassure himself that it contained nothing likely to aid escape. The food-bearers followed.

For a moment Kelly gave no attention to the prisoners. Then, satisfied, he dropped his gaze to Jean. At once his eyes widened.

Calm, quiet, she sat in a hammock, looking at him. Down over her lap, its starry blue field uppermost and its red and white stripes cascading to her boot-tips, lay the American flag.

Kelly's right hand jerked upward, stopping abruptly at his ribs. His neck straightened and stiffened. Dumb, he gaped at the mute symbol for which he and millions of comrades had fought and for which thousands had died. Slowly then his eyes lifted and dwelt on the deep dark orbs so steadfastly regarding him. For a long half-minute that silent gaze held. Then he looked again at the flag.

A deep breath lifted his thick shoulders. His rigid arm relaxed, his mouth closed, his eyes swerved. Wordless, he motioned to the staring Colombians to put down the food and go. And, without another look at American man, woman, or flag, he tramped out and was gone in the night.

XII

THOUGHTFULLY the man and the maid moved about in preparation for their belated meal. By the aid of the lantern left by El Toro they found an Orinoco wash-basin—the upper shell of a turtle—and in this they freshened faces and hands. Then they downed their crude fare in silence.

Dinner over, and pork-smeared hands washed again, Holt cast a glance over the half-dozen hammocks and picked up the lantern.

"Bed-time," he said. "Nothing to do but rest until tomorrow. We haven't a chance to break loose, so we may as well take it easy. I'm sorry I dragged you into this mess."

"You didn't. It was that sneaking Lopez who made the trouble. We'll come out all right, even yet. I'm sure of it."

"Of course," he nodded. "Kelly's a good deal of a man under his rough outside. He'll do the right thing. Well, good night."

Moving to the doorway, he set the lantern outside. An alert guard in front, and two more at the corners, watched him sharply; and he knew that others were stationed at the rear. Giving them no attention, he stood a minute or two in the entrance, looking along the fire-studded street. The man kicked by El Toro had revived and disappeared. Pablo Benito and his peons also had vanished, and Kelly himself was not in sight.

"Poor little kid!" he thought. "You're clear grit, but I don't yet see your way out of this mess. Kelly's gone to drink himself blood-mad on white rum, probably, and by tomorrow he'll be as merciless a brute as any of these mongrels. Oh, well, something may turn up. If there's a ghost of a chance I won't let it get past me."

Then from the darkness at the rear of the hut sounded a soft voice:

"Good night, Mr. Tiger! Carry on!"

"Night."

Wearily he stepped to the hammock beside the door. In it he curled up, facing the entrance, and trying to forget the pain of his wound, which had suffered severely in the fight. He could no longer complain that the arm felt dead. It was aching wickedly. After a time, however, it grew easier, and he managed to doze.

"Wonder just what sort of finish Kelly's fixing up for me," he pondered. "Pretty rough, no doubt. An ingrown hate like his calls for a lot of revenge. Well, it's about time somebody got me. I fell for that slick Otón's trap like a kid for striped candy, and I potted only two men with six shots. I'm slipping. Thought so before. Now I know it."

Yet, with the fatalism of an old campaigner, he lay quiet and tried to sleep. Tomorrow was another day, and tomorrow had not yet come.

From time to time during the night his eyes opened to find Julio, the corporal of the guard, standing in the doorway and, with lantern held aloft, reassuring himself that the prisoners still were in their hammocks. Each inspection was only momentary, and at no time did any man advance beyond the threshold.

Toward morning Hart sat up suddenly, listening to a new sound. From the northern end of the village came the swift throb of a motor, its cadence quickening and slowing with a regularity which told of a repeated testing. Presently it settled into a steady hum which held for several minutes. Then it was cut off. A little later came a shuffle of feet and a question from Julio.

"What is that noise at the *lancha*, *hombre?*"

"It is the work of El Toro himself," replied a sleepy voice. "He is restless and ugly, and he plans a raid for today. He has put in the *gasolina* of Diego Lopez and has made the engine to work. We shall have a *buque de guerra*—a ship of war."

"*Bueno!* Where does he raid, *amigo?*"

"I do not know," yawned the informant. "Who ever knew El Toro to say where he would strike? I am sleepy. *Buen' noche'.*"

The footsteps passed on. Hart sank back, scowling and cursing Kelly under his breath.

Dawn came, and the noises of an awaking camp; voices of men, whinnies of horses, rough jokes bawled from fires to huts and back again; the hiss and crackle of flames reviving under fresh fuel; a wailing tenor voice singing a ribald love-ditty. Hart sat up, stretched, stepped to the doorway, blocked the view of all outsiders while the girl behind him arose. Men straggling past eyed him in various moods: some with frank curiosity, some with lowering stares, a few with malevolent sneers. To all alike he gave only a bleak, contemptuous regard.

A new guard arrived, relieving Julio and his heavy-eyed night watch. To them the Tiger gave a nod and a perfunctory—

"*Buen' dia'*—good morning."

Muffled grunts were the only reply. He turned from them to greet Jean, now summoning him to breakfast.

The meal passed as silently as had the previous dinner. There was nothing to say, nothing to do but await developments. When the coarse food palled they rested in neighboring hammocks, looking now and then at the flag, which she had hung from a low rafter.

The sun was more than an hour high when heavy steps outside, accompanied by the shuffle of many other feet converging on the hut, announced the arrival of Kelly. A moment later he bulked in the entrance, looming huge and sinister against the dayshine.

"Rafael, keep this crowd back," he snapped over one shoulder.

Then he pushed in and halted, feet apart, fists on hips, eyes on the pair who had risen to confront him.

One keen look at him told Hart that he had not spent the night in rum-drinking, but that he was none the less deadly for that. He was cold sober, steady as a stone, grim and hard. Under his unwinking lids glimmered an unreadable light. Squarely in the face he looked at each of his prisoners, and straight at the flag beyond them he glanced without change of feature.

"Wal, what ye got to say?" he demanded. "This here is yer court-martial, Hart. I got me decision all ready now—same as ye had yourn that time in France. But I'll listen to yer pleadin'. Git busy."

"Pleading? To you?" Hart shot back. "The only plea I'll give you is the same one you gave us, four years ago. Go to ——!"

The heavy mouth twitched in a fleeting grin. Then the stony jaw set harder than before.

"That's plenty. And that's all from you. Now, me lady, what's your argyment? If ye got anything to say besides the line o' talk ye spilt last night, shoot."

"Very well."

Confidently she stepped forward.

"You have put Pablo Benito through a sort of third-degree, I suppose?"

"Oh, yeah. He coughed up all he knows. What about it?"

"Nothing, except that I want you to understand why Mr. Hart—or El Tigre, if you like—is going down the river with me. The man Benito and those with him go only because they expect pay. Hard Hart, as you call him, is going for no other reason than that he's an American! A clean-strain American, helping me because I'm an American. He's left everything behind him to do that—and maybe you can understand what that means: he's risking his life, without a man of his own behind him, and with a bullet-hole through his shoulder—yes, and with no way of coming back! I don't believe he even expects to live to come back. And he's doing that for nothing at all except the reason I've given.

"I'm nothing to him. Just an American girl, born under the same flag—the flag that's yours, too! Look at that flag, Sergeant Kelly! Does it mean anything to *you?* What kind of blood's in *your* veins?"

The cold gray eyes under the black brows did not flicker. The stony face did not change. The answer came in a growl.

"Black blood, if ye want to know! The blood o' the Black Irish that never fergit a raw deal. Ye want to know what the flag means to me, hey? It means nothin'! And this hero o' yourn is yeller as a Chink. He's goin' out—why? Because he's busted, and he's crawlin' behind ye and behind the flag to save what's left of his low-down carcass!"

"That's a lie, Kelly, and you know it! Hart, one minute!" Her eyes flashed from man to man. Hart, poised to leap at his enemy, caught himself. "And when you say the flag means nothing to you, that's another lie! I know better. And down in your own heart you know better. And you are not going to murder him or——"

"Ah, cut it out! Ye've both had yer say. Now I'll have me own. Shut up, I tell ye! I'm talkin', and what I say goes.

"Hart, if ye didn't have a bum wing I'd bust ye—with me hands. I'd smash ye to nothin'. But ye're no good anyways—ye caught me off guard last night, but ye couldn't do it a second time, and breakin' ye would be too easy. So I'm goin' to turn ye loose."

Hart, astounded, sank back on his heels.

"What!" he ejaculated.

"Yeah. Ye can git into a canoe and beat it, with a li'l grub. What comes of ye afterward I don't care. The girl, here, stays with me. She's a spunky kid, and I like her. G'wan, now, before I change me mind and have ye shot——"

Simultaneously the two men sprang. The Tiger, his face livid, leaped like a flash. But the Bull was as quick as he. A shock of colliding bodies, a dizzy whirl of battling forms—then three men jumped in at the door and flung themselves on Hart. In a few seconds the raging Tiger was overpowered and held fast.

"So ye won't have it that way," mocked Kelly, backing off. "I've give ye yer chanst. Now— Leggo that gun, girl!"

His fist shut on the darting hand of Jean, which had almost captured his revolver. Without apparent effort he squeezed that little hand numb and tossed it aside.

"You beast!" she breathed. "You—beast!"

"Now," resumed Kelly, ignoring her, "here's where ye git off, Hart. Ye're goin' to be shot. And I'm goin' to do the job meself."

Hart heaved toward him. But the three outlaws hurled him back.

"Jest to make it interestin', though, and not so much like shootin' a rat," Kelly continued with taunting deliberation, "I'm goin' to give ye a gun. We stand back to back, with a gun apiece; walk ten paces, turn and fire. Twenty paces apart, see? Three shots apiece. I hear ye used to be good with a gun, but that don't worry me none. Ye're broke; ye're no good; ye're a one-handed crip; ye can't shoot no more. Ye only landed three bullets out o' six last night, and ye missed *me* clean. Ye'll miss again now. And Bull Kelly never misses. Never!

"Now git outside!"

XIII

BACK to back, in the clear ground before the short row of palm huts, stood Captain Hart and Sergeant Kelly, each with a long revolver in his right fist. Massed along the way on both sides, the lawless gangsters of prairie and jungle waited in tense expectation for the finest show in years—the duel in which either the swift-striking Tiger of the south or the man-breaking Bull of the west should die. At the door of the prison-hut, white-faced and silent, the *señorita* of the Tiger stood helpless in the grip of two wiry bandits.

Fires had been quenched, killing all smoke. The sun shone straight across the dueling-ground, giving each opponent equal light. Kelly had loaded his antagonist's gun with three cartridges plucked from his belt, and had ejected three of the six bullets in his own weapon. Outwardly, at least, neither man had the slightest advantage. But inwardly—which was the better fighter?

Kelly, absolutely self-confident, bragged that he never missed. His hand was nerveless. And Hart had found himself lacking. He had needed a woman's help in the struggle with the *raudal*. He had been tricked into a trap; had wasted bullets in his latest gun-fights; had told himself, and been sneeringly told by his enemy, that he was no good. All these things lay heavy on his mind. Now, in the last desperate show-down, had he a chance?

His eyes veered to the helpless girl. A red flame swept him. Yes, by ——, he had a chance, and he would take it! A foul chance, perhaps, but what did fair fighting mean now? Among murderers—against that beast of a Kelly—with the last hope of Jean depending on his act ——

"Ten paces!" rumbled Kelly, as if reading his thought. "Ten whole paces before we turn! Are ye set? For'ard—march!"

Automatically the pair swung away at marching cadence.

One—two—three—four—*three more and then shoot*—five—six—*but could he turn yellow now, before a girl?*—seven—*No!*—eight—nine—ten!

Hart whirled in the gunman's crouch, gun stabbing toward Kelly. For one fraction of a second he held his fire—the fraction necessary for absolute surety of balance. In that infinitesimal interval Kelly's revolver roared.

Then the Tiger's gun spat. In a reverberating rip of concussions the two heavy weapons vomited their leaden death. Silence fell.

Hart still stood braced on rigid legs. So did Kelly. But Kelly's red face had gone gray. His mouth was open, gasping. His left hand fumbled at his stomach.

Seconds dragged past, each hours long. Neither man fell. Neither man moved from his stance. Kelly's pained breathing was the only sound in a void of utter stillness.

And Hart was untouched. Kelly had missed every shot!

The Tiger's rigidity vanished. He straightened, stepped swiftly toward his foe. Other men began to edge forward, teeth gleaming in mirthless grins, toward the stricken Bull. And then the Bull, too, moved.

His jaws clicked shut. The fumbling left hand darted inside his buttonless shirt. It jerked out again—gripping another revolver.

"Back, you *perros*—dogs!" he snarled.

The stealthily moving men froze. The Tiger stiffened, but kept straight on.

"So that's it, Kelly?" he sneered. "Going to use a full gun now that mine's empty ——"

"Shut up!" grunted Kelly. "Git to the girl! I'll handle these guys."

In his tone was a convincing earnestness that slowed Hart. Amazed, he saw Kelly sweep the ranks with ugly eyes and ready gun, heard him begin to curse in commanding tones. Then he spun about and advanced on the pair holding Jean.

"Away from her!" he barked.

The men started, stared in bewilderment at him and at the Bull, gave way and left the girl free. She ran to him, her face glowing.

"You aren't hurt!" she breathed. "You're safe! And he ——"

"I'm all right," he nodded. "There's something queer here. I'll swear I hit him. I can't understand— But wait."

Under the lash of Kelly's tongue and the threat of his weapon, the men who had thought to finish a fallen chief faded backward. The rest stood mute, their attitudes acknowledging his unbroken mastery.

"You creeping snakes!" thundered the jungle Spanish of El Toro. "How can a man shoot straight with your crooked eyes on his gun? You twisted my bullets in the air! You are snakes in the bodies of men, *caramba*, and you belong to *El Diablo!*"

The ragged bodies moved uneasily, and swarthy faces turned, seeking signs of guilt in one another's eyes. Hart chuckled softly.

"Indian stuff," he muttered to the girl. "Every Indian down here believes a snake can bewitch a gun, and these breeds are more superstitious than full-blood Indians. But what's Kelly's game?"

The answer came in the Bull's next bellow.

"Now I must shoot the Tiger over again, and, *por Dios*, I shall do it where your snake eyes shall not save him! This time I kill him dead! Otón—Antonio—Federico! Come here to me! You others, get away, *pronto!*"

Backed by the three whom he had summoned, he tramped toward the prison-hut. The rest drew away, some furtively, some scowlingly, some with swaggers of bravado.

"Get to yer boat!" sounded a terse command.

"What's the idea now?" demanded Hart.

"Shut up! March to yer launch, I tell ye!"

Face and voice both were charged with ferocity. Yet—did the right eyelid flicker?

Jean turned, ran within, emerged with the hastily folded flag. Down to the waterside passed the six, followed at a safe distance by the entire outlaw pack. Beside the launch Kelly faced about.

"Pablo Benito!" he yelled.

In a minute or two Pablo appeared from among the bandits and approached with a hangdog air.

"Otón, you will command here until I return," Kelly ordered. "Antonio and Federico go with me to watch at my back. Plant a sharp pole before my *casa*. It shall hold the head of this cursed *tigre*."

Otón, captor of El Tigre, grinned wickedly. From the men farther back sounded ugly laughter.

"Aboard!" snapped Kelly. "Up in the bow, Hart! Benito, loosen the rope and stand by. When the boat moves jump in, *pronto*."

As the Tiger and the girl mutely entered the bow, the Bull and his heavily-armed men swung into the stern. Kelly himself, with sure movements, flipped over the switch, primed the sun-heated engine, and rocked for compression. With an explosive hiss the spark caught, and with a rapid purr the launch moved out backward, Pablo nimbly leaping aboard. A shift of gear, a forceful spin of the steering-wheel, a wild chorus of yells from the gangsters ashore, and the power-boat was arching out into midstream.

For several minutes not a word was said. Pablo and the pair of guards, astounded by the dizzy speed of perhaps twelve miles an hour, gaped speechlessly and uselessly about them. The prisoners studied the expressionless face of Kelly, who seemed searching for something along the farther shore. Swiftly the boat surged toward the next bend and Puerto Carreño shrank away behind. Then the eyes of the two ex-soldiers met.

"Kelly, you're an engineer," Hart said, a twinkle under his brows.

"I am that, and I can ingineer more things than one," was the gruff return. "Keep yer face straight."

The Tiger's face went blank. The girl's turned forward to the river, away from Antonio and Federico. The bend swept nearer—nearer—swung between the boat and the receding village. Puerto Carreño was gone. Ahead, at the left, a long, low rock jutted from the bank.

Toward that rock Kelly steered. To his two men he yelled:

"We stop at that *roca*. Step out on the stern now. Be ready to jump ashore when I stop the engine. Put down all your weapons. Out! Make ready!"

Gingerly they obeyed. Balancing on the stern, holding to the stanchions, they poised for a leap. Rapidly the rock approached.

With a sudden whirl of the wheel Kelly sheered outward. As the boat careened he bellowed—

"Jump!"

Involuntarily the tense pair loosened their tight holds. Like a flash their commander jerked about and hurled himself at them. One big hand smote each at the knees, knocking his legs from under him. Instantly Kelly was back at his wheel, wrenching the wild rudder back into place.

Two horrified screams—two yellow splashes—the bandits were gone and the boat rushing for the safe water in midstream. Then two heads broke water and frantically swimming hands spattered toward the rock. And as the launch once more headed down the river the unexpectedly baptized pair rose on the stone and howled futile curses after it.

Kelly's face stretched in a wide, wholesome grin.

"And that's that!" he announced. "And now, folks, set down and take it easy. We're on our way to the States!"

XIV

NINETY miles below Puerto Carreño, in a small natural port beside a shelving stone, the launch lay resting in the last light of day. Whistling merrily to himself, Kelly tinkered with the engine which within a few hours had kicked Puerto Carreño and thirty leagues of the Orinoco back into the hazy land of "Never-Again." Beyond him, grouped carelessly on a seat and watching his work with friendly eyes, sat Pablo and Hart and Jean.

Beside Pablo leaned one of the rifles left behind by the marooned guards. Around Hart's hips hung his own belt, full of cartridges, and from it dangled his holster revolver. Jean now wore no weapon. She needed none.

"Yeah, she's tuned up sweet and pretty, if I do say so meself," boasted Kelly, rubbing a grease-blackened thumb across his nose, with quaint decorative results. "I worked half the night on her before I knowed she was right. What bothered me was the bum old battery. Gas was O.K., but till I found her spare battery in its sealed-up case I didn't see no way to git clear."

Jean leaned forward, searching his good-humored countenance.

"You worked half the night on the engine? You intended to do just what you have done?"

"Mebbe so. Mebbe not. I'm a bug on gas ingynes anyways, and—wal, it gimme somethin' to do with me hands while me head was wrastlin' with somethin' else, see?"

He scowled ferociously at the spark-plug and added another grease-streak to his sunburned nose.

"No, I don't see," persisted the girl. "I don't understand why you were so rough, if you meant to let us go. And since you threw those men overboard you've told us nothing. Now please explain."

"Awright." The gray eyes lifted and fronted the dark ones squarely. "I'll shoot the works and be done with it.

"I been achin' for years to git me hands onto Hard Hart and bust him to jelly. I didn't know he was down here—lost track o' him intirely—but I kep' him in mind. I'll say I did! 'Some day,' says I to meself, 'we'll run acrost each other somewheres. The world ain't big enough for both of us. And oh boy, what I'll do to him then! He's yeller,' I says, 'and all that hard stuff he pulled in the war don't fool me none. And when I do git to him I'll make him crawl before I bust him.' "

"Where did you get that 'yellow' idea?" challenged Hart.

"I dunno. Mebbe 'twas because I hated ye so hard. If ye hate a guy bad enough ye can't give him no credit. Anyways, I'm over west a piece and runnin' this gang o' Malojo's, and ——"

"Malojo! Evil-Eye! Is that gang of yours the Evil-Eye outfit?"

"It used to be hisn," Kelly corrected, with a hard grin. "Now it's the El Toro gang—mine, y'understand. I drifted into it after I got in trouble at the gold diggin's. Then me and Malojo had words, and I beat him to the draw and blowed his evil eye out, along with his brains. Then I took control, y'see, and run things me own way."

El Tigre laughed appreciatively.

"Kelly, you're a wonder! Malojo's crowd is the worst one north of Brazil, if not in all South America. My gang wasn't a Sunday-school outfit, but it was half-way decent in some ways. But that Evil-Eye bunch is a mess of snakes."

"Yeah, they're hard-boiled. I've had to treat 'em rough. What become o' your outfit, anyways? How come ye alone and shot up?"

"They quit me."

"Oh." Kelly nodded in perfect understanding. "I git ye. But as I was sayin', I'm over west and I git a tip about this here revolution, with good pickin's for tough gangs like mine, so I come to Carreño. Then in blows this greasy Dago Lopez and uncorks his tale o' wo about the so-beautiful *señorita* and the tough Tigre which is holdin' her a prisoner. He describes this Tigre, and I git a hunch it's me old pet, Hard Hart. So I gather ye in.

"Wall, then things break different from

what I thought. First off, Hart, it galls me that ye got only one fist workin'; it sours the taste o' the man-handlin' I aim to give ye. But that don't stop me. I'm hard-shelled anyways, and bossin' them gorillas o' Malojo's ain't made me any more human, y'understand; and so I start to break ye while I'm good and sore about the bawlin'-out the li'l lady gimme. And then ye knock me block off with one punch. Wow!"

With a wry grin he fingered his lacerated chin.

"D'ye know, Hart," he went on seriously, "that wallop done me good. It knocked some o' the rum out o' me head and some sense in. And then *you*, miss—ye gimme a worse jolt than he did. When ye set in that hammick and looked me in the eye and showed me that flag—it—I—uh—I dunno jest what it done to me——"

"I know, Kelly," she interrupted. "It woke you up. It cut through that 'hard shell' of yours and stung your white-man blood to life. That was just what I was trying to do all the time."

"Yeah. Somethin' like that, I guess. Anyways, I didn't sleep none last night. I done a mighty lot o' thinkin'. It come hard, too, because I'm used to fightin' with other men but not with me own self—if ye know what I mean. But it come to me that all this packin' round with a pack o' yeller cut-throats wasn't no game for a white man; and, more'n that, I got awful homesick. I was so sick for the States I dang near cried! Me! Bull Kelly!"

"By the Lord Harry! That's what ails me, too, but I didn't have sense enough to realize it!" ejaculated Hart, staring as if he suddenly saw a great light. "I've been mooning around and feeling sick and miserable and telling myself I'd lost my grip and so on—and I was just plain homesick! Glad I know now what's the matter. Doesn't do me any good, though."

"So?" Kelly eyed him oddly, but asked no question as to what he meant. "It ain't nothin' to laugh at, anyways, this homesick stuff. There was fellers died of it in the war—nostalgy, or somethin', they call it; feller jest goes all to pieces. But I was tellin' ye, miss, about this here business back yonder. Me bein' homesick didn't make me like Hart no better. When ye been hatin' a man so long and so hard ye can't drop it all to oncet. I swore he was yeller and I'd make him crawl—even while I was tinkerin' on this here ingyne, gittin' ready to move if he wasn't yeller! And this mornin' I put him through.

"Hart, ye wouldn't save yerself by quittin' the girl. And right here I want to say, if ye had quit her, she wouldn't have come to no harm. I ain't as low as all that. I had it all fixed in me mind that I'd git her down the river safe, after ye quit. But ye didn't quit.

"So then I give ye the gun. If ye was yeller, ye'd turn before ye finished yer ten paces, to plug me in the back. And if ye had, I'd have killed ye like a rat! I had a man set jest at the end o' me own ten paces, watchin' ye like a hawk, and I was watchin' him the same way. If ye started to turn he'd gimme the sign and I'd sidestep and blow yer heart out. I wouldn't have lost out. I never miss."

"You missed three times today," disputed Hart.

"Nope. I put every bullit where I wanted it—over yer head! I lifted 'em in the air. When ye even took the time to git set before openin' fire, instead o' crashin' away in a flurry, it was all off with the 'yeller' stuff. Ye'd come clean, and I had to make good. At that, ye nearly done for me. Lookit here. Excuse me, miss."

Over his shaggy head he pulled his shirt, exposing his hairy torso to the waist. On his skin showed three bruises; two almost together, over the heart, and the third on the stomach.

"That's what yer bullits done, Hart. I doctored yer shells last night—the three I give ye today out o' me belt. Spilled some o' the powder, put in wads, and crimped the balls in again. Oh, I was playin' safe. Good thing I did! I'd be awful dead now if I hadn't. As it was, the balls jolted me but didn't go through. But this one here, in the solar plexus, knocked the wind out o' me a minute. If I'd tumbled, them sneakin' gorillas would have finished me quick—and you too, Hart. They was right on their toes when I got me wind back and pulled the other gun. Mebbe ye noticed."

A slow nod answered him. Hart seemed to be thinking about something else.

"Wal, that's all," finished Kelly, "except that now I'm headin' for home, where I can look me own flag in the face and see *white* folks—and girls with clean eyes like yourn, miss. I can bull me way through somehow. These Venezuelans ain't got nothin' on me, and I've got a clean slate in the States too. What I done in Colombia don't count except in Colombia."

"I was thinking about that," Hart sighed. "You'll go through all right. It's different with me. Before it's too late, though, I want to say I'm sorry now about that thing in France. I was too hard. But I didn't know——"

"Aw, let it slide! Bygones is bygones. Ain't there no way ye can git back home? No chance? Lookin' for ye up there, mebbe? I see. That's tough. Wal, le's git out onto the rock, where us hard guys have got to sleep, and let the li'l lady have the boat for her own boodwar. It's gittin' dark, and we've got to move at daybreak. Benito! *Vamos!*"

But they did not yet debark. Jean interposed.

"You'll sleep better, maybe, Mr. Tiger, if I tell you a little news. You can go back home whenever you like, with no questions asked; at least, none that will hurt you."

The Tiger paled; then reddened with anger.

"That's a mighty poor joke—" he began.

"Will you keep quiet? It's no joke. Let me tell you.

"When dad and I were in Bolívar, General Perez spoke of you. He said it would be a good thing for you and for this country if you'd get out of it; that if you stayed here you'd certainly be shot sooner or later, and that Venezuela didn't like to have North Americans killed here, even if they ranked as revolutionists. More than that, he said he'd be glad to give you free passage out of the country, with the understanding that you'd stay out."

"A federal trap!" he scoffed. "Does he think I'm so green——"

"Wait, wait! The general also told us that some people in New York had tried to get word to you—the letters are in Bolívar now, and have been there for a long time—that a man named Wharton wasn't dead——"

"What!"

Hart's leap to his feet rocked the boat.

"That's right. The name was D. H. Wharton——"

"Good ——! That was my partner! It's a fake! I smashed his skull——"

"*Will* you keep quiet?"

"Shut up, ye howlin' baboon, and give the kid a chanst!" seconded Kelly.

Hart gulped, nodded, and stood dumb.

"You broke his skull, yes. But he was taken to a hospital, and the fracture was trepanned, and he recovered. Later he was arrested for stock-swindling, and he now is in prison. So your fight with him isn't likely to cause any trouble now.

"It's not a fake. I saw the letters myself, with newspaper clippings, and they're genuine. The Venezuelan secret service at Bolívar had opened them, because you were a known revolutionist; and then they were kept by the general. He said that if we happened to run across you we could use our judgment about telling you. And I—well, I'd have told you anyway, even if you hadn't come down the river. But since you did come, I—I wanted to see just how much of a man you were!"

Hart sat down again, heavily. He stared at her, and at Kelly, and back at her. Finally, with a queer grin, he said:

"Well. Guess I'll have to go home."

"I'll say ye'll go home!" erupted Kelly. "If ye don't come along peaceable me and the li'l lady will put a dog-collar on to ye and drag ye. Ye lucky stiff! Ye go shootin' round this man's country, and a girl from up home comes down and gits ye, and a merciful guy like me lets ye live instead o' blowin' out yer liver like I ought to done. Why? Jest because the three of us happen to be Americans! It ain't right. But come on, le's tear off some sleep. Night, miss!"

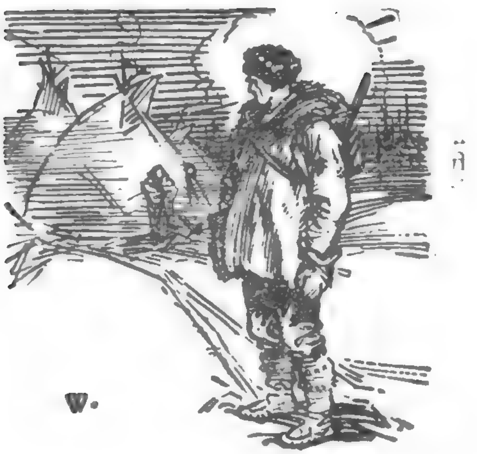
"Good night, Kelly. You're a man!"

Whereat Kelly, arrogant master of the worst gang north of Brazil, turned redder than ever and floundered hastily over the side. Pablo, aching with curiosity about all that English talk but afraid to ask questions, followed. Hart, wordless, extended his gun-hand to the girl; the hands clung for a long, silent minute; then he stepped ashore as if in a dream.

The big tropic stars, marching in disorderly array across the great blue field above, looked down at a launch wherein lay a smiling girl, holding close a cloth on which were other stars, with stripes of red and white. On a bare rock beside the boat they saw three armed men lying quiet, side by side, guarding the girl and the flag. And perhaps the rare atmosphere of the twinkling worlds vibrated with the thoughtful summary spoken in an undertone by one of those resting men.

"Blood's thicker than water, isn't it, Kelly?" mused the Tiger.

"I'll say so!" responded the Bull.



HOW IT WORKED

By

William Byron Mowery

Author of "The Third in a Quarrel," "The Seventh Man," etc.

A TALL white man of twenty-eight or thirty, muffled in furs except for his smooth-shaven face, stood in the center of the circle of teepees. His carbine was slung at his back; one foot rested easily upon his hand komatik, which carried a slender outfit.

The simultaneous bark of a dozen "crackies" that burst up out of snow-drifts about the Indian camp brought six Yellow-Knife warriors outside of their caribou-skin teepees. They were out before the stranger had finished kicking the yellow dogs away from his leggings; but each had his rifle in his hands and, to judge by the dark, suspicious looks, wanted to use it upon the intruder.

He glanced from one threatening Yellow Knife warrior to another, as unconcernedly as if they were so many tree-stumps. Behind the warriors, in the skin flap-doors of the teepees, every age of Indian, from papoose just out of *attijek* to wrinkled hag with tobacco-stained mouth, peered out at the white visitor, who now took off his racquets and hung them on a spruce limb out of reach of the omnivorous "crackies."

"I want to see Dog-Legs," he announced, in a voice that was crisped by the thirty-below atmosphere.

For a moment no one stirred. Then a warrior motioned to a lad of fourteen, who seemed to fade away into the early morning gloom of the spruce clump. In barely a minute he was back again.

"There is no one else about. He comes alone—from the south," the lad reported, in the dialect of the lower river.

At this, the tense faces of the warriors relaxed a bit. Still, none of them stirred till the white man spoke again.

"Yes, I come alone," he said, showing that he had understood. "I want to see Dog-Legs," he repeated, more emphatically. "At once."

"Dog-Legs is not here," snapped the warrior who had beckoned to the lad. "This is not his people."

"He is in *that* teepee," retorted the stranger, pointing to the seventh tent, before which no warrior stood. "Take me to him."

The warrior grunted in surprize, stalked across the circle and disappeared into the teepee. After a minute he came out again and motioned to the stranger to enter.

Dog-Legs was sitting on a wolf-skin in front of a handful of fire. He looked up sharply at his visitor, but did not attempt to rise. His dwarfed, crooked legs were curled up under him; his face showed cunning and villainy. The white man saluted him coolly and sat down. They stared at each other for a full minute.

"Where are you from?" the Indian asked, in good English.

The white man pointed to the south and held up four fingers.

"What brings you unasked to our camp—where the dogs are hungry?" was the next question.

The visitor smiled, though there was no

bluff in the Indian's savage threat. "I just kicked the stomach out of three hungry dogs," he replied. "I could have shot down your whole gang of thieves while they were rubbing the sleep out of their eyes. But I come in peace."

"From the Fort?" Dog-Legs asked quickly.

The white man laughed.

"Who of them at the Fort knows where you are hiding? You know as well as I do that Big Chief Kenzie and his men have been making a great noise all Winter trying to find you. I come, for my own reasons, to ask about a man."

"Who?"

" 'Red' Perrault."

Not a muscle of the Indian's face moved. "Who is this Red Perrault?" he asked.

The white man went on, as evenly as if Dog-Legs had not asked the question.

"You alone know where I can find him. He is within three hours' run on dogs from here. I will find out where he is and you shall tell me."

The Indian's eyes blinked craftily.

"Who are you?"

"I am Flint Guernsey."

At mention of the name, the Indian uttered a sinister ejaculation and started to reach for an old army pistol beside him on the wolf-skin. Apparently he changed his mind on his own accord. Possibly he saw his visitor's hand drop, imperceptibly swift, to his belt.

"I know nothing about this Perrault," Dog-Legs reaffirmed, visibly impressed with his visitor's manners.

"Listen to my words and you will live to kill more buffalo from the Government herd," said the white man, compelling Dog-Legs to look at him. "When Red Perrault shot my brother and brother-in-law last December, and when I went after his tribe and got his old man and his cousin, Big Chief Kenzie and his yellow-striped horsemen-without-horses ran up and down the river for weeks looking for us. I had to go on a long journey to the land of the Bad-People. This cur Perrault came and hid in these swampy hills. At the fort they know nothing about him, but do you think I lost his trail for one day? The moose-bird told me everything. I have come back to *get* him."

"Go and get him," Dog-Legs advised, with a grimace.

"When you have told me where he is hiding."

"Your words are silly. I know nothing about him."

"Listen to my words, and you will live to murder some more Loucheux and steal their furs," the stranger said coolly. "The Perraults know many of your doings, all of which are bad. They know almost as many as I do. You were afraid of him. You had to hide him. You got a price for that, besides. The moose-bird told me everything. You lie like a tree dropping leaves when you say you don't know where he is. You jumped when you heard my name and knew I was on his hot trail at last."

Dog-Legs was silent for a minute.

"I may know—or I may not," he replied cunningly. "But you are foolish to give me orders and to threaten me. There will be six rifles pointed at this tent-door when you go out. If you listen to my words and go at once and peacefully, you may live long enough to ask your moose-bird where to find Red Perrault."

"Listen," retorted the white man, "and you may possibly rob another miner of his gold and set him adrift on the River. Red Perrault would love, better than his own life, to look at me over the sights of his long rifle. This is a blood feud between him and me. The other deaths are but incidents, like shooting grouse when you are after the moose. He will find out, soon or late, that I came to fight him and that you put a pack of your mangy thieves on me. He would dangle your lousey head on a spruce limb for the jays to peck at. But that is not all. Before I started across the hills for your camp here, I told two others where you are hiding. If I do not go back or send word to them, they will tell Big Chief Kenzie where he can find you."

Dog-Legs stared into the fire, thinking hard. The white man, watching the other's face keenly, was silent too. He drew out a pipe and lighted it.

The silence was critical. It was the real battle, of which their words had been only the skirmishing. Across the face of the visitor flitted a momentary fear, as if he had played his last card and was uncertain if it would win or lose. For fully half an hour, while the copperish cold sun crept up over the spruces and peeped inside the flap, not a word was spoken.

Then Dog-Legs raised his head.

"I will take you where Red Perrault is hiding," he said.

"You thought too long," the white man retorted. "You have hatched up a plot to trap me. Red Perrault is surrounded with deadfalls."

In spite of his frozen features, the Indian betrayed, by an almost comical expression of surprize, that the white man had read his thoughts correctly. He ejaculated, "Ugh!" as if it meant, "No use!" Into his manner crept a positive fear of his visitor's uncanny wisdom.

"But," continued the white man after a minute, "you can bring Red Perrault to me. He will come if you but mention my name to him. His hate is burning him up. He will come. I shall go back five miles along the way I came and be in the spruce belt by the long rock. There he will find me, and one of us will not walk away. Let one of your men take word to him so that he will come before noon."

"Be it so!" Dog-Legs concurred. "And if you win?"

"I will see to it that you will not be disturbed—unless you murder or rob again."

At a call from Dog-Legs one of the Yellow-Knives stooped and entered the tent. The white man listened to the instructions, then followed the warrior outside. He waited, before buckling on his racquets, until the Indian had disappeared in the February half-light.

II

THE spruce clump stretched for half a mile beneath the high pink-granite ledge. The approach, on each end, was through dense thickets of alder and muskeg willow, so that the chances of a first sight were as nearly even as they could be.

In the very center of the clump, the tall man stopped. From the hand komatik he took a sleeping-bag, which covered with a jacket-coat and fur dickey-hood, looked surprizingly like a man. Adjusting the figure carefully beside a tree, he slipped into one of the coat pockets his own belt-gun. With extreme care, using a ball of strong white cord, he made a short tie to the trigger of the revolver and a longer tie around the dummy. The komatik was pushed under the snow. Then, swishing his racquet tracks shut and laying the cord along on bushes, he walked backwards to the bluff and secreted himself by a jut.

Toward noon a flock of whisky-jacks gathered around the dummy and examined it noisily. A few minutes later, other whisky-jacks set up a clamor in the north end of the wood. They came nearer. When they were a couple hundred yards away, the man beside the rock gave the string a quick jerk.

The report of the revolver was followed almost instantly by three rifle shots. The man by the rock pulled on the string again, and the figure tumbled into the snow. Twice more the hidden rifle cracked. After a silence of ten minutes, a medium-tall, red-faced man with a livid knife-weal across his face, strode out of the bushes and approached the tree.

"Jack 'em up, Perrault!"

The voice rang out clear and commanding as the man by the rock leveled his carbine.

Perrault swung around with his rifle at his cheek. His first bullet splattered his enemy with rock-dust.

"——!" rasped the man by the ledge.

He aimed carefully but quickly and pulled. Perrault, hit hard in the shoulder, spun around and fell. But as he saw his enemy rise up from hiding, he jerked out his belt-gun with his left hand and emptied it.

All his shots went wild. The other man counted the six and then ran up in time to knock the belt-gun from Perrault's hand as he was trying desperately to reload it.

Perrault stared rabbit-eyed at his captor.

"Who in —— are youse?" he frothed.

The other laughed.

"That's all right, Perrault. Sorry I had to bore you in the shoulder, but that will only make you a little more docile, perhaps. I fixed this dummy up in hopes that I could get the drop and wouldn't have to wing you. Wanted to take you in to the Fort with a whole skin."

"To t' Fort? What in —— do youse mean?"

"Yes, to Fort Thompson." The other was laughing, mostly with his eyes. "See here, I'm Sergeant McIntosh of the Royal Mounted, down at Fort Dickson. When Kenzie's men here at Thompson couldn't stop this killing between your bunch and the Guernseys, and couldn't track you or Flint, they brought me up here."

"An' youse had to get me with a pack o'

—— lies!" Perrault exploded. "They's only one thing that 'ud brought me out o' hidin', an' that was a sight o' Flint Guernsey."

The other laughed, all the while he dug the komatik out and made it comfortable for the prisoner.

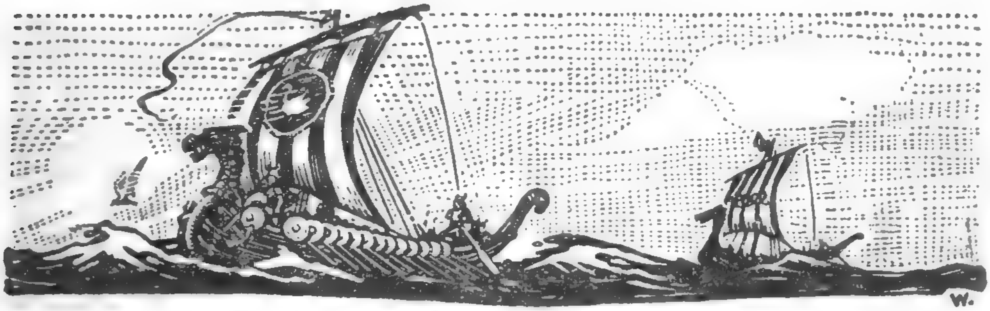
"No, you're wrong about those lies. I said one of us would not walk out of these woods, didn't I?"

"Youse said I'd see Flint Guernsey!" Perrault blazed.

"You will," the other rejoined. "That is, at the Fort."

"At t' Fort?" Perrault bellowed; then dropping his voice to a hoarse whisper, "At t' Fort?"

"Yes, he's at Thompson, in the butter-tub. He was hiding away among the Bad-People and kept on the jump. I tried every one of the old stand-bys to get him. When everything else failed, I arranged for him to meet you in a duel, and—but let's get started. *You* know how it worked."



SWAIN'S END

A Complete Novelette

by

Arthur D. Howden Smith

Author of "Swain, Jarl-Maker," "Swain's Sons," etc.

IN THE old days the greatest man in the North, so the skalds sing, was Swain Olaf's son, who dwelt on the isle of Gairsey in the Orkneys and held lands far and wide in the Orkneyar and in Caithness on the Scots' main. He owned five longships, and traded overseas what times he was not for viking-faring or cultivating his farms. The Orkney Jarls looked up to him, both with fear and respect, for he was an ill man to be crossed by Jarl or common man; twice in his lifetime he brought about a shift of Jarls, and it was he who coined the saying, "One Jarl rules by might; two Jarls rule with justice."

Yet when Jarl Rognvald was slain in battle, and the complete dominion of the Orkneys fell to Jarl Harald, Jarl Rognvald's young cousin, Swain, who had fostered Harald in his youth and once had driven him forth of the islands for a lesson, declared none other should share Jarl Harald's rule. And when certain of the *boendr*[1] fell to murmuring and reminding Swain that he, himself, formerly had warned them always to have two Jarls, so that one might be played against the other at need and their power be divided, he said to them:

"It is true that I spoke as you assert I did. That was many years ago. But Jarl Harald has grown up under my instruction, and if he was foolish in his youth, that is a right to which all youths are entitled. Now he is a wise man and a skilled warrior, and my opinion is that he is the best Jarl we could secure. Let him alone, and encourage him to raise up sons to follow him. He will defend you from your enemies and rule justly."

---

[1] Hereditary land-holders.

Some of the boendr grumbled at this, but none of them dared to speak up at the Thing which was held at Kirkiuvag to confirm Jarl Harald's succession, and the long and the short of it was that the people accepted him, and with Swain at his elbow to advise him he ruled the islands for many years without once incurring trouble from within.

He was a tall man, and strong, very ugly, and in his later life little given to speech. Of all his friends he reckoned Swain the closest, and it was a source of sorrow to him that in a quarrel they had had in the past he had been—unwittingly—an assistant in the slaying of Swain's mother by Olvir Rosta, Swain's deadly enemy.

This Olvir was feared in the northern countries almost as much as Swain, for his home was his longship and he lived entirely by raiding and ravaging. He was a powerful man, with broad shoulders and long arms, and his beard was black; he was noted for his craft in war and his ability as a spear-caster. Many kings had courted him for the value of his services against their enemies, but he was never able to dwell long in any one place because of Swain's enmity. Their feud had begun when they were boys, and men say that it consumed more folk than any other one cause since Olaf Truggvi's son's time. Among those who perished were Swain's father and mother and his two brothers and Olvir's grandmother, Frakork, who was reputed a witch and slew many by means of malignant spells and incantations.

For a few years Olvir endeavored to stand up before Swain, but at last Swain became too strong for him, and thenceforward their warfare was a series of flights and pursuits. Once, Swain drove Olvir from Mikligard,[1] where Olvir had taken service in the Vaerang Guard of the emperor; again, they clashed in Russia; three times Swain voyaged to Norway to root his enemy from the king's court, and each time Olvir escaped before Swain might lay hands upon him or bring him to swords' points. Their keels had furrowed the seas from Iceland to Njorfasund,[2] up and down the Mediterranean, all along the coasts of Serkland[3] around the circuit of Bretland[4] and Scotland and the green shores of Irland,[5] into the harbors of heathen Spainland and Gaulland, and back and forth from the Norse countries and the islands of the sea, the Hjaltlands, the Sudreyar, the Syllingar[6] and beyond.

Olvir made numerous efforts to compose his differences with Swain by paying manbote for his slayings, but Swain's unflinching answer was that the deaths he held against Olvir could be wiped out only by blood. Even the Orkney Jarls attempted to adjust the quarrel because it took such bitter toll of their people, but no one of them was successful, and ultimately they found it to their advantage to take Swain's side. For if Olvir was a wolf of prey, as his enemies declared, nonetheless was Swain the great mastiff of the hunting-pack.

Olvir lived always beyond the law; Swain was never bound by law or creed, if it was not to his advantage to be, yet he preferred to live peacefully and considerately, in so far as he might. He harmed no man who did not harm him—except on his viking raids when he ravaged all except the Norse peoples. And he accumulated such wealth that Jarl Rognvald said there were really three Jarls in the Orkneys—by which he meant Swain as well as himself and Jarl Harald.

There was this difference between the two men, also:

Olvir lived to raid and burn and slay; he never planted a grain of corn or built a house or married a wife and reared children; he was, first and last, a means of destruction. Men feared him and loathed him, and his name was a catchword to frighten children; no one loved him. The very kings who hired him and his rough house-carls and viking comrades were chary of his company. He trusted no man; no man trusted him.

Swain was a man of property; he farmed wide lands; he had hundreds of contented tenants and servants; he was liked by his friends as much as he was hated and dreaded by his enemies. The plunder and booty he won by his viking cruises he sank into lands and longships and gear. He had two sons by whom he set great store, Olaf and Andreas. Their mother was an Irishwoman and queen in Man, but a mighty shrew, and for certain intrigues she had launched with Olvir, Swain committed her to a convent in the Syllingar where she lived out her days.

---

[1] Constantinople.
[2] Gibraltar Straits.
[3] Saracenland.
[4] Britain.
[5] Ireland.

[6] Shetlands, Hebrides and Scyllies.

On no score did he resemble Olvir, save it be the hatred they felt for one another. They were both brave, it is true, yet the bravery was of different sorts. Olvir was brave after the crafty, calculating manner of the outcast; he lived for the one purpose of slaying Swain, and after Swain, Swain's two sons, as he had slain the others of their family. He would never stand and face Swain or any man, unless numbers and advantage were on his side. Death for a point of honor was a foolishness he mocked at. Swain, on the contrary, would have died sooner than flee. Honor to him was more than success. He felt a contempt for Olvir which was unjustified, and the reason for it was Olvir's unwillingness to meet him man to man and accept holm-judgment,[1] after the ancient usage. Because of this he set down his enemy as niddering and cowardly, whereas in truth Olvir had as much courage of another sort as he himself.

They were different in all things, as far apart as the sun-baked coasts of Serkland and the glazed cliffs of Iceland, Swain a huge, blond giant, his ruddy hair and beard still bright in middle age, his fiercely cold blue eyes undimmed; Olvir a massive dwarf of a man, all immense shoulders and bulging, apelike arms, black and swart as the Moors amongst whom he sought refuge more than once from Swain's prodding keels.

Strong, both. Brave, both. Both untamed. Both boiling with a hatred which overmastered everything. But wait! Everything? In Olvir's heart, perhaps, yes. In Swain's, no. Two passions tore at him—hatred of Olvir and care for the two sons he destined to carry on his name and avenge his death if Olvir won in their struggle. All he lived, all he owned, all he did and won, he entered up for Olaf and Andreas. They were his future, his continuity with what was to come after him, just as he had carried on the obligations, the savings and the hatreds of his father before him.

That represents the essence of the difference between the two men—Olvir, the freebooter, and Swain, the farmer and viking chief. Olvir was a lone wolf, with the lone wolf's disregard for all things other than his own ends. Swain was the leader of a herd, of a pack, and when he remembered his feud and his enemy, he curbed the lust of his hate with the memory of those who depended upon his conduct. He fought for more than his own hand. Olvir fought—as he lived—to destroy. Swain fought and lived to build up.

II

IN THE Spring in which Swain's sons attained their eighteenth year—they were twins, born at a birth—a Norse merchant who had wintered in the south of Irland stopped in the Orkneys on his voyage home with the tidings that Olvir Rosta had taken service with the King of Dyflin.[2] As it chanced, Swain had completed the Spring planting and was casting around for an excuse for viking-faring, for he could never bear to bide at home after the Winter gales had ceased blowing and the seeds were in the ground, so he summoned Erik, who was his forecastle man at sea and the captain of his house-carls ashore, and bade him turn out the company of the steading and haul the longships forth from their pent-sheds and boun[3] them for the ocean-path.

"I dreamed of oar-threshing in the night," commented Erik. "We shall travel far."

"We go after Olvir Rosta," returned Swain. "If the gods are kind we shall sail back from this cruise with his head on *Deathbringer's* prow."

"No heathen god will help to Olvir's doom," answered Erik. "My advice is that you burn candles to the blessed saints upon this venture, Swain."

"No," said Swain, "this is too important to trust to any one god. We will burn the candles in St. Magnus' Church, and I will also seek out old Skallagrim Thor's priest, who knows the ancient rites, and give him a horse for sacrifice."

This Erik was an Icelander, a small, leathery-faced man, with a blinking eye and a dry humor, bandy in the legs. He fought with an ax, and was esteemed to be exceedingly brave, albeit he would never accept battle with a stronger if he could avoid it.

"Excellent," he approved now. "The old mare that is at grass in Skorfdale pasture is past her useful days. Give her to Skallagrim. Thor will never know the difference between her and a young stallion."

---

[1] Ordeal by battle on an islet, whence escape was impossible for the defeated.

[2] Dublin.

[3] Equip.

Swain said that he would, and then left the skalli and took a small-boat to sail through the Aurridafiord to Kirkiuvag on Hrossey where Jarl Harald dwelt. He entered the Jarl's hall after candle-lighting when the house-carls' tables were full, and all men looked up eagerly to see him, those who sat at the high table as well as the common folk.

"Ho, Swain," Jarl Harald greeted him, "I perceive by your face that the oar-itch is upon you."

Men laughed at this, and there was a crowding forward to hear Swain's answer.

"It is true, Lord Jarl," Swain said. "My fields are sown; my men are bouning the ships."

The Jarl nodded.

"I feared as much. Men told me what Ospakar of Bjorgvin[1] said when he beached at Orphir."

"Here is no fear," returned Swain somberly. "It is many years since Olvir came so close. My luck is with me. This time he cannot escape."

"Such is my hope, also," rejoined Jarl Harald. "Yet I must say to you as your friend, Swain, that you are challenging ill-luck by continuing your marauding expeditions. No man can continue forever to miss death, risking it continually, as you have done."

"What is your meaning, Lord Jarl?" asked Swain.

"My meaning is plain. You have been successful for many years and gained great wealth from viking-faring. Now, I would have you stop and think whether you have not done enough, lest you perish in the full tide of your fame."

"After this cruise, perhaps," replied Swain. "When I have slain Olvir Rosta I will sit at home in my skalli and watch the exploits of my sons and other young men. But so long as Olvir lives I must pursue him. Else I am niddering."

Jarl Harald shrugged his shoulders.

"Well I knew this would be your answer," he said. "You are no man to take advice, however friendly meant."

"Not so, not so, Lord Jarl," cried Swain. "I would rather take advice from you than from any other. But I would have you remember, too, that my honor is at stake. All my life I have sworn to slay Olvir; all my life I have pursued him; and all my life he has evaded me."

"I do not dispute what you say," answered the Jarl. "But I spoke what was in my heart. It would be a sad blow to me if you perished."

Swain smiled and reached across the high table, before which he stood, and clasped one of Jarl Harald's hands.

"The ale has turned sour in your stomach, Lord," he said. "What talk is this of perishing? I may die in battle, as any man may; but it will not be Olvir Rosta who slays me so."

Jarl Harald then took a gold chain from around his neck and hung it about Swain's.

"We have passed through many dangers together," he remarked. "We have been father and son, friend and enemy, outlaw and inlaw. And the end of it is that we are comrades. I give you this token, Swain, for the love I bear you and to signify my appreciation of services skalds have often sung."

ORKNEYAR
PETLANDSFIORD

Now Swain was deeply touched by this, for Jarl Harald was a taciturn man, seldom disposed to such free expressions.

---

[1] Bergen.

"You have spoken as becomes a friend," said Swain. "Likewise, your advice is sound. If it were not for the honorable obligation upon me to slay Olvir Rosta I would heed what you say and bide at home as becomes a man who is past his youth, and whose strength is wasted away in the wet work and the fighting. But I do not doubt I shall catch Olvir on this cruise, for he is too near to escape me. When that is done I shall have no more occasion for viking-faring, unless it be on your account. Therefore I promise you that this shall be my last cruise. I will endeavor to win as much fame as possible on it, and afterward I will leave off war-going."

"Ah, well, comrade," returned the Jarl sadly, "you promise all that I have a right to expect of you, but it is difficult to know which comes first—death or lasting fame."

He made Swain sit beside him on his right hand, and there were many ale-horns emptied to the success of the expedition and scores of chiefs and warriors came forward and volunteered to go upon it. And the Jarl, himself, not to be behind the others in manifesting friendship for Swain, promised to send two large dragons, fully manned.

III

THE next day Swain returned to Gairsey, and as he ran his boat ashore his ears were deafened by the clamor of the workmen who labored over his longships, the battering of the mallets of the calkers and the clinking of steel in the smithy by the strand where the armorers wrought upon the gear. Overnight Gairsey had turned from the peaceful pursuits of the Spring planting to grim preparations for the viking harvest, which was frequently more fruitful than any crop reaped from the furrowed earthen fields.

Erik and other of Swain's chief tenants and servants came up to him to tell what was being done and to hear the news from Kirkiuvag, but before they had more than opened their mouths to greet him two stalwart figures burst through the ranks and clutched him by either arm. With a bull-roar of good-humored wrath Swain knocked the intruders' heads together and then jerked them apart again.

"Ho, younglings, what rough play is this? We are men grown here."

"And so are we," shouted one boy.

"As fit for oarwork or fighting as a half of your house-carls," retorted the other.

Swain chuckled, despite himself. They were strapping lads, with muscles toughened under his own supervision. Alike in features and stature, Olaf was dark after his Irish mother, while Andreas had his father's ruddy blond hue.

"Could you find no tasks for them Erik?" demanded Swain, half-jestingly.

"They have been shifting food-chests from the storehouses," replied the little Icelander, "what time they were not assailing me for my influence with you."

"You promised we should go viking this year," cried Olaf.

"So did you," proclaimed Andreas; "and have promised it this past two years."

"You carried Hakon, Jarl Harald's son, with you last cruise," added Olaf.

"And we shall be the mock of all the young men in the Orkneyar," cried Andreas. "We shall be writ down niddering and spiritless, and no man will give up place in his skalli."

Swain cast them from him against the side of one of the longships, chocked upright on the beach.

"Peace, peace," he commanded. "You deafen me. Make an end of this babble. Since when were you Jarls' sons?"

There was a moment of silence. Then Andreas drew himself erect, rubbing the shoulder which had cracked against the longship.

"We are Swain's sons," he said proudly.

"Well answered," acknowledged Swain.

And a murmur of assent came from the circle around them.

"We bear a great name to live up to," exclaimed Olaf, following up his brother's advantage.

"And that is why you may not go," stated Swain. "You are my sons, the last of my blood; and I go after Olvir Rosta, as foul a hound as tracks his way over Rann's Bath. Either I shall be the death of him or he will slay me. I do not think the latter will occur, but if it does I hope to be avenged; and who will avenge me if you two fall first to Olvir's spear?"

"He can no more slay us than he can slay you," protested Olaf.

"And you promised," began Andreas.

"Promise or no promise, you do not go,"

growled Swain. "I spoke of a viking cruise, of harrying in Gaulland or South Bretland, perhaps. I said nothing of a chase after the wiliest, cruelest ravager of the Northlands."

"But Hakon——"

"Hakon will not go with me this cruise. No boys are to go. This is a men's faring."

"Be advised," spoke up Erik kindly. "Swain is an eager as any of us to blood you fittingly, but you are more than two extra blades. You are his surety that his wealth will not go into strange hands, that his name will continue to excite respect outside of skalds' songs."

The two boys stood sullenly against the longship's mossy hull without answering.

"Yes, yes," urged Swain. "What Erik says cannot be gainsaid. Accept my rule in this matter, and next year——"

"Next year!" sneered Andreas.

"Next year, youngling," Swain repeated. "That is what I said. Next year I will send you forth, each in his own longship, with Erik and a few other seasoned chiefs to guide you, and you shall fare as far as you please and set to the winning of your saga places."

Olaf exchanged a quick glance with his brother, and stepped forward eagerly.

"We have another plan, if you will not take both——"

"Both!" roared Swain. "I take neither!"

"No, no," persisted Olaf. "We have a proper plan."

"A proper plan! By the memory of Jarl Rognvald, who are you to lay a proper plan?"

"Yet it is proper for your ends," answered Andreas. "Tell him, Olaf."

And Olaf hastened on:

"You say that you cannot risk us in company with yourself. Oh, often you have told us of your pursuit of Olvir. Never a lesson in weaponcraft, but you pointed it with a tale of Olvir's wickedness! But see! You need not leave both at home. One can be hostage for the future——"

"And cut the other's throat out of jealousy," remarked Swain dryly. "A proper plan, in truth!"

The two boys voiced simultaneous denial.

"Let fate decide," said Andreas.

And Olaf cried:

"We cannot quarrel against luck. One goes. One bides at home."

"What could be fairer?" demanded Andreas.

"We cast lots to go or stay," explained Olaf.

Swain's chill blue eyes bored into their flushed faces. The mutter of approval from the circle of chiefs was sweet music in his ears. Two fine bear-cubs he had reared. Sons worth while, these.

"Humph," he grunted. "And how will you choose? What shall be the test?"

They crowded toward him, faces now alight.

"You agree?" they clamored. "One is to go?"

He hesitated, weighing the issue in his mind. One hostage or two? What had he to fear? Olvir Rosta? He snorted at the idea. He had supreme confidence in the result of his life-long chase. What, then? Why tie two lads at home? He decided.

"One shall go," he answered briefly. "But which? How will you choose?"

They exchanged another private glance, and Olaf replied with dignity:

"You shall pluck a hair from the beard of each of us. He whose hair is longest shall go."

Swain stared at them, then burst into a bellow of laughter, in which all present joined.

"Beards?" he snorted. "What talk is this of beards? Why, I see not enough to hide your lips! Say, rather, I may pluck from the backs of your hands."

Andreas answered him with undiminished dignity.

"It is true that our beards may not yet be as apparent as we might wish. Nevertheless, if you look closely you will perceive that we are not maidens."

"And since we are equal in all things else, the fairest test between us is to discover which one has the longest beard," added Olaf.

Swain choked back another burst of laughter, and strode closer to his sons. He thrust a couple of immense fingers into either cheek, explored, caught hold of a sparse downy fuzz and finally came upon specimens sufficient to give him a purchase. A couple of tugs, and he stepped back, a filiment of hair in either fist.

"Left and right," he murmured. "Olaf, left. Andreas, right. By the Hammer, but here is a fine-drawn distinction. Erik, you must aid me, for I would show Jarl's justice in this issue."

The Icelander peered down at the two hairs, his leathern features cracked by the same grin as masked every face in the group.

"Left—right," he murmured, too. "Humph! Let me see. Hold them to the light. Humph! It seems to me, Swain—and the gods forbid that I should incur thereby the enmity of any new-fledged warrior—yes, it seems to me that the—ah—the——"

"Would you call it the right?" asked Swain, grinning.

"The right? The right?" Erik stroked his own sparsely-covered chin. "Humph! Now, let me look again. The right? It maybe—yes, perhaps. By the breadth of a thumbnail, Swain."

Swain flicked the two tiny filaments into the air.

"That is my judgment, also," he announced. "The right hair was the longest. Andreas goes."

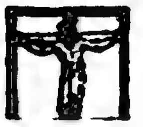
Olaf swallowed hard.

"It was my plan," he said. "Better that one goes than neither."

His father clapped him on the back.

"Your's is the chief responsibility, boy," quoth Swain. "For you, the future, certainly. For Andreas, perhaps—and perhaps not. I will sacrifice to all the gods in this matter."

IV



SWAIN'S folk crossed over to Kirkiuvag on the Sunday, and Bishop Bjarni celebrated them a high mass, and Swain offered many candles to St. Magnus, the patron of the Orkney men and himself a viking-farer of renown. Afterward Swain and Erik and certain of the chief men sailed to Eidey where dwelt Skallagrim, Odin's priest, carrying with them the old mare, and Skallagrim led them to Odin's altar on a hillside overlooking the sea, and the horse was sacrificed and the blood offered, as of old. Little was said of this at the time, for that Bishop Bjarni and the other clerks were enemies to Skallagrim and strove mightily to put down the ancient worship; but it came to Jarl Harald's ears and he was very wroth.

"You have done ill," he said to Swain. "It is bad enough that you go on this expedition against my advice, but now you have brought down upon your head the curses of Christ's servants."

"Oh, no, I have not," returned Swain; "for they know nothing about it, nor is it my intention that they shall."

"It does not matter," said the Jarl bitterly. "You can have no good luck from such heathen practices."

"I am not so sure of that," rejoined Swain. "Olvir Rosta is the grandson of a witch, who was the enemy of all Christians, and he, himself, has trafficked with the Powers of Darkness. If he has a protector it will be among the Old Gods, and for that reason I have sought to propitiate them, as well as the Christian saints. I do not see what the saints can do with Olvir; he is not of their sort."

All the same, you will secure no good by what you have done," insisted the Jarl. "For, at the least, you cannot pay the price to the Old Gods which Olvir has paid, and therefore they will not sell him to you."

"That is true," admitted Swain thoughtfully, "unless it happens that he offends them. Well, I have done all for the best, and if the gods—Christian or other—intend to aid me, they will. If not, it cannot be helped. As for Bishop Bjarni, I have given him great store of gold and silver at divers times for masses and dispensations, and vessels for his altars and vestments for him and his priests. Indeed, I have never kept for myself what I spoiled from southland churches. So I do not see that the holy bishop has any cause for fault-finding with me. If he proves to me that his religion aids me to slay Olvir I will foreswear Thor and Odin and all other gods of our people; but until then I will serve both sides that neither may take offense."

"Perhaps you are right," said Jarl Harald. "It is a difficult question, and each man must settle it for himself. But I beseech you to be cautious in what you do. For the skalds have sung truly that the gods may protect a man, but his own shield stops the arrow."

"I will remember your words, Lord Jarl," answered Swain. "And now I have a boon to ask of you."

"Name it," said the Jarl. "Whatever I have is yours, Swain."

"It is that you will be governor over Olaf, my son, the while I am gone, and supervise his administration of my properties, treating him in all ways as your own son."

"I will do so," promised Jarl Harald. "And if ill luck has its way, and harm befalls you, he shall continue as my son, and I will support his cause against all oppressors and in the end find him a good marriage and raise him to high place among my advisers according to his merit."

"I cannot ask more," said Swain. "But you may inscribe in your memory what I say, which is: Olvir cannot slay me living."

"Cannot slay you living?" repeated the Jarl doubtfully. "Those are strange words, Swain. What mean you?"

"No, I cannot say," said Swain. "Fate, itself, speaks with my voice. I know it, yet I cannot say how."

"Why, you are no spaeman to forsee the future," protested the Jarl.

"Not I," replied Swain. "But perhaps the gods have favored me out of their usual course, for I say to you again that I know Olvir shall not slay me living. And if he cannot slay me living, how shall he slay me, dead?"

"This is past understanding," said Jarl Harald.

And therewith he crossed himself. Nor did he or any other man understand Swain's saying until the event befell, when it was remembered, and all marveled exceedingly.

* * *

ON THE day following, Swain's vessels sailed from Gairsey for the south, seven dragons fully manned; and all the way through the Efjusund to the open sea the shores of Hrossey and Hrolfsey were lined with people to watch them pass, and many ships attended them, Jarl Harald in his own longship accompanying them along the coast until they struck off westward into the Pentland Firth. It was one of the noblest expeditions which ever set sail from the Orkneys. Men said there had been larger, but none more handsomely equipped.

There were emblems of dragons and ravens and pictures of saints and crosses on the sails, and the sides of each ship were hung with shields newly painted. The rowers were all strong men of full growth, and their oars swung in splendid unison. The poops and forecastles were crammed with chieftains and famous warriors, and there was a brave glint of armor and gilt and silvered mail.

They had fair weather, threaded the Sudreyar without mishap, and so came through Irland's Haf[1] to Dyflin. And great was the fear of the people of the city as they looked from their strong walls and saw Swain's longships in the river, and this notwithstanding that the city was well-fortified and in addition to their own numbers they could rely upon the aid of Olvir Rosta and his two hundred freebooters, landless men and outlaws, but nevertheless noted far and wide as raven-feeders, fearing no man and never seeking quarter or granting it.

The King of Dyflin was not then present in the city, but his chief men gathered in counsel and anxiously discussed their plight, for Swain's name was well known in those parts, and whenever his dragons showed on the Irish coasts the people fled inland and the small towns paid him tribute to escape worse scath.

Several were of a mind to strike a composition with Swain, while others declared it would be unworthy to buy off a viking rover; and in the course of the dispute they sent for Olvir, who was a favorite of the king by reason of his wickedness and ability to direct his hand to any evil mission that was required.

Olvir strode in to them all shining in silvered mail, with a winged helm on his head and his big ax, Skulltapper, in his hand. His beard was black as midnight, and it fell to his waist. So long was it that in battle he tucked the ends into his belt that they might not fly up into his face. His eyes were black like dead coals in the fire, but behind their deadness flickered a subdued, sinister light, which could leap up into a conflagration of fiendish mirth or anger—as if a demon had blown it to life. His body was so broad that he seemed shorter than he was, although he was really a full head shorter than tall men; and his arms were so long that they hung to his knees. He was feared in battle because he could reach out to twice the distance of others, swinging his ax from a point where his enemy could not reach him.

The light in the depths of his dull, black eyes commenced to flicker with a derisive mirth as he listened to the opposing plans of the Dyflinmen, and when the last had spoken, he said—

"Do you wish me to tell you what I think you should do?"

"Yes, yes," answered the richest merchant of the town, with a touch of uneasiness—he feared Olvir as much as Swain. "We know you have been a warrior all your days, Olvir, and are wiser in such affairs than we. Also, you know the heart of the king, our master, and can help us to decide according to his wishes."

---

[1] Irish sea.

"That is to be seen," replied Olvir. "However, here is my judgment on your plight. Both of your factions are in the right. It would be a great shame to surrender so rich a town, and so populous, to a roving viking squadron, and you do well to suppose that the king, your master, would not be pleased thereby. As against this view, too, may be set the fact that Swain is a brave and resourceful chief, and despite your high walls and multitude of people, you will be hard put to it to resist his attack."

"But this is not advice that you give us," cried another merchant. "You tell us only that we all are right, and that no matter what we do either way disaster lies. For if we do not succumb to Swain we shall bring down upon us the displeasure of the king!"

"That is true past doubt," returned Olvir blandly. "Your one hope of escaping evil consequences is to do as I bid you."

"What is that?" demanded several of his hearers.

"This. Swain is my deadly enemy. He has two motives in coming here. One is to compass my death; the second is to secure as much booty as he can."

"What, then, is to prevent us from repelling him without effort by giving you up to him, with a small sum to reward his trouble?" demanded one of the younger merchants.

The derisive flicker became a glint as dully hard as the glow in polished steel as Olvir turned his eyes, beneath their heavily thatched brows, upon the speaker.

"Who would deliver me to Swain?" he inquired softly.

Nobody answered him, and he added:

"I do not believe your king would be pleased by such conduct, nor would it be spoken of to the credit of your city. I am here among you to defend you gainst the very peril which now confronts you."

"And which you say comes upon us because of your presence!" cried the chief of the merchants.

"In part," acknowledged Olvir. "But I warn you Swain is no man to let off lightly a city so cowardly as to surrender me without an effort of defense. He would take from you your last mark of silver and every jewel your wives wear."

"We have yet to hear your plan," said the merchant after a pause. "We will suspend judgment until we have heard it."

Olvir's lips twitched in what might have been a grimace of saturnine amusement.

"Presently," he said, "Swain will land his men and approach your walls. At your gate he will demand admission, and when it is refused him, he will say that he comes hither seeking me, his enemy, and to punish those who granted me in Dyflin a sanctuary from his vengeance. Now, my counsel is that you should accept his demands, agree to give me up and suggest that he enter your city and estimate charitably the fine you should pay for your offense in receiving me in your midst."

A gasp escaped the lips of the assembled merchants.

"And you call this the way to escape the evil consequences of your presence!" protested the young merchant who had spoken before.

"It is the first part of my plan," said Olvir coolly. "I would have you say likewise to Swain, when you speak to him as I have recommended, that you desire him to enter because you find it impossible to cope with me."

He broke off to remark off-hand—

"There is no lie in that!"

And then continued:

"You will say to him that I have retired with my men into the borg by the rivershore and refuse to come out, because I know of your purpose to surrender me to him; and that therefore all you can do to aid him is to give him admission to the city, and a free path to conquer me in the borg as best he can. You may be sure Swain will accept your offer."

"Are you so sure that you can resist him in the borg?" asked the chief merchant.

"What of us after he has entered?" called a second.

"You have given us to understand that he will not be moderate in his demands," protested a third.

"Patience," answered Olvir very gently. "I do not always say what I think, and in war I seldom offer an enemy what I actually intend for him. Do what I have said. Throw open your gate for Swain. But first dig a great pit inside the gate, covering it lightly with a framework to resemble the surface of the street. Muster and arm all your men, and conceal them in buildings close by the gate and the pit. Then when Swain leads his men in through the gate, he and those with him will be plunged into the pit, his followers will be thrown into confusion and you can fall upon and destroy them."

The Dyflin men wagged their heads in wise assent.

"But what of you, Olvir?" inquired the young merchant who had twice challenged him.

"Why, I shall be ready in the borg to come to your assistance and aid in the slaying," answered Olvir, as the coals of his eyes flared alight again. "You would not have me by the gate? Swain is no fool to be trapped by any simple trick. You must do exactly as I have said or he will detect your object and refuse to enter."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed the principal of the merchants. "What you say is so, Olvir. This is a good plan that you have made. My judgment is that we should practise it."

"It is the only way you can resist Swain," said Olvir. "If you attempt to fight him without trickery he will break down your walls and ravage and burn from one end of the town to the other."

"And by means of this trick we shall be rid of Swain and his raids forever," cried the young merchant. "The blessed Patrick be our aid that we may sweep these northern scoundrels from the seas!"

"You will require more than the saints to master Swain," grunted Olvir. And as he went out men heard him mutter—

"While the dog fought the cat the fox took his meal."

But nobody knew what he meant.

V

SWAIN mustered his men out of the longships, and arrayed them in a shield-wall on Dyflin strand. Then they marched up to the city gate, and took their stand a long arrowshot distant. The day was bright, and the sun sparkled on the close-set helms and the spear-heads and the sword-blades and axes. So terrible was the spectacle that Swain did not marvel at the fear-struck faces that peered down from the city wall and the sounds of wailing that came from within.

"It seems they are poor-spirited folk in Dyflin," he said contemptously.

Erik, at his shoulder, looked dubious.

"They are merchant-folk, and unwarlike," answered the Icelander. "But it is not the way of the Irish to give up hope before the fighting."

"We have come this way before," retorted Swain. "If they yield without a struggle, so much the better."

He went forward to the gate, a house-carl bearing a peace-shield by his side and Erik and other chiefs behind him.

"Ho, Dyflinfolk," he called when he was within hearing of the men on the battlements over the gate, "I am Swain of the Orkneyar. You know me."

"Yes, yes, Swain," shouted back the chief of the Dyflin merchants. "We know you well, and we have never done you harm."

"You have done me foul harm," returned Swain. "You have accepted into your city Olvir Rosta, who is an outlaw from the Orkneys because of the murders he has committed and who is my deadly enemy."

The merchant began to wring his hands.

"Alas, alas," he cried. "Well do we know how overbearing Olvir can be. He has been a harsh master to us in Dyflin."

Swain snorted with renewed contempt.

"He and his few against your many! Well, I am here to relieve you of your fears. Hand him over to me, and instead of sacking your city I will make a composition with you."

"But we can not take him, Swain. He has retired into the king's borg that lies by the river-shore. We knew he was your enemy, and we begged him to leave the city that we might make a peaceful adjustment with you. And then he cursed us all, and said that he would not trust us farther."

"This is a queer tale," muttered Erik in Swain's ear.

But Swain shook his head.

"It is like enough what Olvir would do. You do not know him as well as I, Erik."

He turned again to the Dyflin merchants on the wall above the gate.

"You have done me a great wrong," he said. "You have shielded my worst enemy, and now, when I ask you to give him up to me, you say that you can not do it. That leaves me nothing to do except to take your city, and with it, Olvir."

"No, no," cried the merchant.

And as if at a concerted signal there rose within the city a redoubled volume of wailing and weeping.

"We are peaceful folk," the merchant went on. "The king and his warriors have gone from us, and we have no means of fighting, even if we would. Spare us, Swain!"

"You speak foolishly," replied Swain. "Why should I spare you when you have offended me, and are helpless, into the bargain?"

"But we will do anything to assist you. We will make any reasonable terms."

"What do you call reasonable terms?" demanded Swain.

The merchant appeared to pause and consult with his fellows. Then he answered—

"If we yielded the city in order that you might be able to capture Olvir, would you undertake not to despoil us and to retire as soon as you had achieved your object?"

"You must pay me scath and fine for shielding Olvir, as well as for the trouble and expense I have been put to," returned Swain.

"But we are poor people," bemoaned the merchant. "We can not——"

"I am weary of talking," interrupted Swain. "I see that it would be possible to take the city with little effort, even though you offered resistance. Will you pay or not?"

"How much?" countered the merchant.

"One hundred marks of gold and five hundred marks of silver," Swain replied promptly.

The merchant tossed up his hands in horror.

"There is not so much amongst us! No, there is not so much in all Irland!"

"That or nothing," insisted Swain.

"We can not pay it," rejoined the merchant.

"What can you pay, then?" asked Swain.

"Twenty marks of gold and——"

"We will take fifty marks of gold and two hundred marks of silver," Swain cut him off. "My answer! Swiftly, Dyflinfolk, or we loose the arrow-hail."

The people on the battlements ducked for cover, and the chief of the merchants cried out:

"We accept! We accept! You will take oath to do us no harm?"

"Any oath you please, so long as you render us the city and do not stand in the way of our seizing Olvir," promised Swain.

So the Dyflinfolk called priests to the battlements, and they made Swain swear to the terms on certain holy relics.

"This is all very well, Swain," objected Erik when the oaths had been taken; "but it occurs to me that it is you alone who are swearing. The Dyflinfolk have not sworn to anything."

Swain laughed harshly.

"Why should they?" he replied. "What have we to fear from them? Once we are in the city, we hold them and all their property in our hands."

But Erik shook his grizzled head.

"I like it not, Swain," he persisted stubbornly. "A city is not an open field. There are streets and houses, and in narrow places the bravest host may be shot down by any enemy."

"You are leaping from shadows, Erik," remonstrated Swain. "It is no more than to be expected that the Dyflinfolk should prefer us to Olvir. Also, by this plan, they get rid of both of us at one stroke."

"It is not right," declared Erik. "I have a feeling there is something wrong."

"What?" challenged Swain.

"How can I say? But let us do this: There is no reason why all of us should go into the city together. If you are set upon going, let me hold back with a few score men, and be ready for whatever happens."

"Nothing can happen," answered Swain. "If the Dyflinfolk should attack us we would slay them like kine at a strand-hewing."

"That is true, yet Olvir is a wily foe, and it may be he has a trick behind his shield. If you attack the borg, and parties of the city-folk fall upon you in the midst of the fray, you will be in a sorry plight, with a foe in front and another behind. Do as I say, Swain, and let me bide outside the walls to aid you at need. Yes, and better still, let us manage it so that the Dyflinfolk do not perceive what we are doing."

Swain was impressed by Erik's earnestness, albeit unconvinced by the Icelander's arguments.

"Have it your own way," he said. "But I see not how you can conceal from the Dyflinfolk that you remain outside."

Erik pointed to a chapel and priest's house at one extremity of their shield-wall, the only buildings close to their array.

"I will pass the men under cover there before you march in," he said. "We will draw up our strength so as to conceal it, and I shall remain hidden until all is well or you have occasion to require us."

Swain agreed with this plan, and they returned to the shield-wall and moved the men into a dense column alongside the chapel and priest's house, and while the array occupied this position Erik and five score more slipped into the two buildings, without even the foremost house-carls being the wiser for it. Then Swain gave the word, and the Orkneymen marched forward to the city gate, which stood open. The group of merchants had retired from the battlements above it, and the walls were almost deserted. Only here and there a man stared down at the dense mass of mail-clad Northern giants, swinging along with immense, kite-shaped shields on their left arms.

Inside the gate the streets of the city were empty and the houses shut up, but Swain did not pause for this, for he imagined that the Dyflinfolk were too fearful of his company to risk contact with them. He did not even unsheath his sword.

No outcries greeted the invaders. The wailing had died away long since. The tread of the column echoed loudly between the shuttered houses. Only the dust stirred to meet them, and it was this which roused Swain's first hint of suspicion. Immediately inside the gate the roadway was beaten hard, but halfway down the street the earth was soft and crumbly, and suddenly the ground rumbled hollow under-foot.

Swain halted and flung up his hand.

"Back, there! Let us——"

But the front ranks of the column automatically had tramped after him across the crumbly stretch of earth. There was a grinding, crackling noise, and the street caved in, as the light withes and planks which upheld it sank beneath the burden of armored men. A cloud of dust billowed into the air, and Swain and his vikings tumbled in a heap to the bottom of the pit the Dyflinfolk had dug.

The onward thrust of the column drove after them several additional files, and the pit became a struggling mass of humanity, kicking and striking and biting at one another, uncertain of what had happened and fearing treachery at every hand.

A howl of glee from the surrounding houses! Roofs and windows swarmed with men, and a storm of spears and arrows smote the startled column of the Orkneyfolk. From adjoining cross streets poured other bodies of the Irish, who made up for their inferior arms and stature by the surprize of their onset. The invaders reeled back, startled, baffled, panic-stricken. Their ranks were shattered. A hasty attempt to form a shield-ring in that narrow space was ended almost as soon as it started. The topmost men of the writhing mass in the pit were butchered without a chance to strike a blow.

Swain, himself, was saved because he was the first to fall, and with him, nigh smothered under the sweating, frenzied heap, was Andreas. Instinctively, as he felt the earth give, Swain had reached out and thrown his arm about the boy, and luckily for Swain, Andreas had landed undermost, easing his father's fall. But it was impossible for either of them at first to break free from the weight of dead and living men above them. Swain ruthlessly slew one fellow who cumbered his sword-arm, thrust aside another with his shield and strove to stagger erect, intent upon clambering over the high-stacked bodies to the pit's lip; but each time he gained his feet he was knocked down again, and in the confusion his house-carls ignored his bellowed orders to raise shields over their heads to resist the missiles that continued to rain down upon them, and the Dyflinmen reaped a red harvest from Olvir's strategy.

To say truth, it was well for Swain he was kept down perforce. Men had run out from the houses now, and stood at the edge of the pit casting their spears at the Orkneyfolk they had trapped; and the main body of the islanders were fully occupied defending themselves. There was a moment here when it seemed likely that Olvir's plan would win every advantage he had sought—and surely, the luck was bitter against him, for by every rule of chance he should have secured the death of Swain and Andreas at the first blow.

But Erik's caution saved the day for Swain. The Icelander, from the door of the little chapel, watched the column of his friends defile through the gate, marked the last flutter of red and green cloaks, the dwindling glint of helm and harness. All went well, so well that he diverted his attention from the gate and idly noted that the few men who had lingered on the walls had vanished. Then there came faintly to his ears a yell of surprize and consternation. A pillar of dust towered beyond the gate. And as he sprang out of the church he heard a swelling clamor of voices.

This was sufficient for him. He summoned his men from their hiding-places and led them at a run toward the gate, but as he neared the walls he heard more distinctly the tumult of the fray and it was very plain to him that the tide was setting against the Orkneyfolk. Through the open gateway he glimpsed a swirl of fighting, ragged, disordered, a conflict of scattered groups. And from this alone he knew that the issue was doubtful, for if the Orkneyfolk had their way they would be fighting coolly, methodically, in the invincible array of the shield-ring, or, in wedge-shaped formation, chiefs and captains at the peak of the wedge, hewing a path through the loose ranks of the Dyflinmen.

Here was defeat, disaster. Erik stopped and bent a wary eye upon the line of the walls. They rose before him, gray and empty as far as he could see, and the thought popped into his brain that such aid as he could carry to Swain might better come across the walls than through the gate, falling as unexpectedly upon the men of the city as had their onslaught upon Swain's column. So he struck off from the road, sending back a score of men to fetch furniture from the chapel and the priest's house. With this material, and a tree he chopped down with his ax, he contrived a means of scaling the wall, and presently he stood on its farther side, peering up a narrow alley toward the confusion of battle in the main street.

A babble of dismay greeted his appearance from some women in a near-by house, but they were too frightened to make him any trouble and Erik's men climbed over the wall like so many ants, dropping in couples and by fours at his side. After a score of them had reached him he undertook an advance to secure a better idea of the fighting. He had not gone six paces when a redoubled outburst of shouting and sword-clashing ahead caused him to break into a run, calling over his shoulder for his people to follow him at speed.

The alley brought him to a wider street which ran into that in which the battle was joined, straight in front of him perhaps a spearcast away. The Irish, with their backs to him, were hacking wildly at the scattered groups of Orkneymen, but the center of the fighting bubbled about a vast pit in the street. Erik could see men in winged helms striking up out of the pit, and the lightly-armed, nimble townsmen thrusting down at them.

As he watched, there was a surge in the pit, and a huge figure was upthrust as if a catapult had propelled him. A gilded helm gleamed in the sunlight, a great sword flashed and the warrior from the pit gained the edge. Tottering, he balanced there, then lurched forward, slaying an enemy as he moved. The roar of a mighty voice pulsed in Erik's ears; the sword swept up and down, back and forth, slashing through armor, leather jerkins and unguarded flesh. Other lesser figures jumped up beside the gilded helm. Then the Dyflinmen swirled around the group, and submerged it under a pelting rush of bodies—and Erik came into action. His voice thundered an answer to the roar which had reached his ears.

"Hold them, Swain! Out swords, Orkneymen! Shield to shield!"

With his own force he smashed into the rear of the Irish who assailed the groups of Swain's men nearest the gate, scattered the townsmen and tore their ranks asunder, drove on across the street, and beat back the enemy there. Hastily he collected all of the Orkneyfolk who could stand and threw them into two bodies, which he led along either rim of the pit towards the whirlpool of the Irish who still assailed the little party that had fought a way up out of the hole behind Swain. And here he had a more difficult task, for the Irish, knowing that they had shot their bolt and fearful of the vengeance the invaders would visit upon them, fought with a desperate valor that took no account of numbers. Pinched back and front now, themselves, they died in their tracks, content if they could drag down a foeman with them, snapping their teeth at northern throats, trying to hamstring those nearest them as they fell.

But Swain's savage lust for slaughter and the organized discipline which Erik infused into the main body of the Orkneyfolk proved too much for mere bravery. The moment came when Andreas, darting forward under the sweep of his father's sword, stabbed the last enemy between their ranks and the oncoming host of Erik's men. One last sweep of blades, a final harvest of Irish lives, and the enemy's remnants broke and fled helter-skelter into the byways of the town. And a mournful keening rose from the rooftops where the women had taken refuge and whence they had watched the dread conclusion of the struggle.

Erik leaped a litter of corpses, and straddled his bandy legs to stare up into Swain's keen, blue eyes, smiling with the joy of battle from the clotted mesh of his red-gold beard.

"That was a wise fear which kept me beyond the gate, Swain," he cried. "We should be cold clay otherwise."

Swain gave him a clout on the shoulder which all but brought him to his knees.

"You had the right of it, little man. Trust an Icelander to perceive war-wiles through a stone wall!"

Erik nodded, very self-satisfied.

"Oh, I was sure Olvir would never yield so readily or allow others to, for that matter," he said.

A puzzled look came into Swain's face.

"Yes," he answered, "but where is Olvir?"

Erik gaped.

"Where is Olvir?" he echoed. "What of all this?"

He swept his arm toward the shambles that cluttered the street from where they stood to the city gate.

"I have seen nothing of Olvir," replied Swain. "I have not seen him, nor have I heard his war-cry, and I would know his voice at any time."

"Humph," grunted Erik. "This had all the seeming of one of his tricks."

"It is in my mind that we should be watchful for more trickery," said Swain grimly. "Call in the men. We must find a prisoner who can be persuaded to speak of their plans. A rich merchant will do best; they are always supple under torment."

VI

BUT as Erik sounded a horn to rally the Orkneyfolk a man named Valbrand Gutorm's son—he was a tenant of Swain's in Caithness—ran up all out of breath

"Olvir Rosta is shoving off two longships from the haven by the borg!" he shouted.

"After him, then, before he clears his keels," answered Swain.

And all those who were with Swain ran toward the king's borg which rose by the river; but by the time they had traversed the twisting streets and gained the river-bank Olvir's ships were floated and the oars were manned.

Foaming with balked rage and hate, Swain waded waist-deep into the water, shaking his bloody sword aloft.

"Bide for me, Olvir," he screamed. "Hold where you are, and I will come against you with equal strength, ship to ship or man to man, as you choose."

Olvir clambered onto the poop-gunwale of his dragon, spear in hand, a sour grin on his swart face.

"I am become weary of fooling you, Swain," he returned. "You grow simple as you wax in years. But you have the luck of all simple folk. Yes, that is to be said for you. Any but a witless man would have perished in the trap I set for you today. Yet I call all to witness, knowing you as well as I do, I was prepared for your luck, and laid my plans accordingly."

"You are niddering, and a coward, also," cried Swain. "Words are your weapons and witchcraft the only means you have of doing harm. A boy could conquer you."

Young Andreas had jumped into the river after his father, all aflush from the fighting and the fleshing of his maiden steel. He, too, swung his dripping sword aloft and called out in his ringing voice:

"Fight me, if you fear my father, Olvir! I will meet you with any weapon you say."

"I choose this," returned Olvir.

And heaving back his arm he cast his spear with all the power of his bulging back and shoulder musclse. Low and true it skimmed across the surface of the water, direct toward Andreas' heart, but the boy threw himself to one side and caught it aslant upon his shield, so that it struck only a glancing blow. Then he caught it up, wet and dripping, and cast it back. But he had not the strength for such a far cast, and was hampered by the water which came above his waist. Olvir reached out and plucked the spear from the air.

"I see you return my gift," he said. "That is unkind of you, but it may be I shall present it to you a second time."

"You are afraid to meet us," shouted Swain again. "Ho, it is you are the fool, Olvir. If you had been a warrior you would have joined the Dyflinmen when they assailed us inside the gate. Then you would have been the end of me."

Olvir shook his head with a mocking grin.

"I do not think so, Swain. You would have smelled out the trick sooner had I been there. Also, why should I lose men against you when I can secure others to fight you in my stead? It is true that I should find pleasure in thrusting my spear into your bowels—as I hope yet to do—but after all, your death is your death, come one way, come another, and it is all the same to me how it befalls."

"Whatever my end, it will not come at your hands," rejoined Swain. "For you lack the courage to fight me."

"Yet I shall be the means of your death," retorted Olvir. "It has been foretold. But the tide is ebbing, and I must fare seaward. I owe you thanks, Swain, for diverting the townsfolk the while I plundered the king's treasures from the borg. I am finished with Dyflin, and you may have what is left."

He waved his hand lightly, and sprang down from the gunwale. The oars of his longships hovered, dipped and pulled home, and their prows shot down-river, urged by the suck of the ebb. That was the last that was ever seen of Olvir Rosta in Irland or in any of the eastern and southern lands, but afterwards in Iceland he boasted to folk who spoke to him of Dyflin-taking that he had drawn the townspeople into their treachery to Swain for the two reasons: first, that they might, perhaps, overcome Swain or slay him; and second, to provide himself with the opportunity to load his longships with his own plunder and the king's treasures and escape while the combatants were engaged with each other. For it was always Olvir's way to ignore faith with any men to gain his advantage.

"If the luck was with me," he told the folk of Bishop's Tongues, "I reckoned the Irish would slay Swain, and in any case, I was not for risking myself with them, whatever the odds in their favor, for well I knew they would never stand against the Orkneymen if it came to a push. And it is evidence of the skill with which I planned that the Irish failed to slay Swain and in the end he overcame them, yet while the two parties fought with each other I made away with all that was worth carrying from the king's borg and got to sea and so came hither."

Thorhall Asgrim's son, who was the chief man in the Bishop's Tongues dales, cleared his throat after Olvir had spoken.

"What you say is doubtless true, Olvir," he observed. "Yet some men might say that you had foregone an opportunity to make sure of Swain's death by lending your aid to the Dyflinfolk."

Olvir laughed coldly.

"Some might say so," he acknowledged; "but they who reason so are not gifted with far-sight. It is not my way to risk my life when I can get others to fight for me. Also, Swain's coming afforded me the opportunity I had long sought to make away with the treasures the King of Dyflin had stored in the borg. He was an ale-quaffing-fellow whose thick wits had begun to weary me."

"Ah," said Thorhall politely. "Yet you had taken service with him?"

"After a manner of speaking," agreed Olvir carelessly.

"Each man fashions his own conduct," said Thorhall.

And albeit the Icelanders had scant use for Olvir and his ways, they suffered him to abide in peace on a farm he had from old times high up on Greyfell under the flanks of the Jokul. But we have sped on in advance of the story, and turn back now to where Swain stood on Dyflin strand, with the city behind him a smoking furnace of rapine and slaughter and Olvir's longships fleeing down-river.

It was never Swain's habit to bide quietly in the face of disappointment, and he waded quickly ashore to muster his men. They were gone clean out of hand, what with the blood-lust that had come upon them and the loot that lay on every side; but he and Erik and the other chiefs set upon those that were rebellious and beat them with the flats of swords, and the Orkneyfolk were outside the walls and running for their ships before Olvir's sails had been blurred out in the river-haze.

Swain's first fear was that Olvir might have tarried in passing to assail the beached dragons of the Orkneymen. If he had done so there would have been few to resist him, for Swain had led to Dyflin all save a handful of watchmen, barely enough to guard the ships against any little party of hostile countryfolk. But if Olvir had tarried he must have lost the ebb, and he feared that Swain might come upon him in the act of destruction and save ships to go after him. And without the ebb to help him on, Olvir knew well he would lose in such a race.

The end of it all was that Swain's ships were whole and safe, but his men were spent with the fighting, two score of them slain outright and twice that number wounded grievously in body and limb; and when

Swain sought to push off the tide turned, and with it the wind. He knew the chase was hopeless at that moment, so he bade the weary crews rest on the shore and held council with his chiefs.

They discussed the situation at length, and the decision reached was that three longships, carrying the wounded, should return to the Orkneys, while the remaining four dragons, manned by the pick of their men, were to pursue Olvir as long as they could secure information as to the course he steered. In order that they might not lose trace of him they launched their ships that evening and rowed slowly to the river-mouth, where they captured some Irish fisherfolk who told them Olvir's ships had headed south.

Swain drew his vessels together in a star, and he, himself, stood on the prow of his dragon *Deathbringer*, where all men could see and most could hear him.

"This cruise has begun otherwise than I had expected," he said. "Also, it appears to me that it will require more time and effort than I had supposed it would. But I am resolved to pursue Olvir wherever he goes, no matter how long we must remain afloat, for I have given promise to Jarl Harald that I will not go viking-faring another year, and moreover, it bodes ill for my reputation that Olvir should have tricked himself out of our hands so easily. I charge those of you who return home to acquaint our friends with what I say, and especially, to tell our Lord Jarl why I remain so long abroad. We will endeavor to conduct ourselves so that you need not be ashamed of what we do after our parting."

All the crews cheered lustily what Swain said, and Gunni Hroald's son, who was to command the three homebound longships—he held lands of Jarl Harald in Sandey—called out to Swain:

"Luck to you, comrade! We will tell the skalds and those who sit at the high table that your valor is as restless as of old. Many men would say a cruise was fitly successful if it achieved the intaking of the strongest town in Irland, but that is not enough for Swain!"

And all the homebound folk cried after Gunni:

"Luck to you, Swain!" "Luck to you, Swain's folk!"

Then the longships parted. Gunni and his three fared northward, and Swain led the other four south. He had for ship-captains Havard Grim's son, of Caithness; Thorar Hnefi's son, who dwelt at Westness; and Kolbiorn Jon's son, of Hrossey. They were men of great courage and skill in seamanship. Of Kolbiorn, as of Swain, it was said, that he had followed the path of Erik the Red and Leif Erik's son into the unknown western seas; but this is outside of the present tale.

Swain was his own ship captain. Erik, as always, was his forecastle man, and Andreas, with whom Swain was much pleased for his daring in Dyflin taking, was chief over the bowmen and spear-casters on the poop. They were a mighty company.

VII

IN THE night there blew a half-gale out of the northeast, and Swain had this profit from it: that it filled his sails before it did Olvir's far away to the south, and with the dawning the lookouts on the prows of the Orkney ships glimpsed the hulls of the outlaws low down in the southwest. The Orkneyfolk clapped on all their speed in the effort to overtake their prey. The forecastle and poop men took their turns at the oars with the rowers, and the steersmen conned the ships so as to secure the best advantage from wind and wave. But it was no use. When the night came the pursuers were no nearer than at first, and in the morning Olvir's craft had disappeared.

Two days later Swain had word of them from a fishing-hamlet on the Irish coast. They had passed under full sail, headed northwest. And again, three days afterward, when the pursuers put in for fresh water at the mouth of a large river, they were told that two Norse galleys had been before them.

The next day a storm came from the west, and Swain's ships were driven for shelter into the nearest haven. But they put to sea undeterred on the fourth day, so soon as the seas had moderated, and steered on toward the north. From then on, however, they lost track of Olvir until they came to the point of Ireland which juts out into the wide ocean all by its lone, an empty headland where the waves beat all of the days and the curlews and whaups cry shrilly from year's end to year's end.

Here they put in for meat, and were fortunate enough to catch a farmer, who, in his guttural Erse, which Erik alone could comprehend, stammered a tale of a big, black-beared viking chief who had fallen upon a little village up the coast and plundered it to the last crude barrel of rough ale and the bacon-flitches hung from the peasants' eaves.

"What way did he sail?" asked Swain.

And the Irlander, when Erik had translated the question, gestured to the north.

"That would be Norway," said Swain.

"Yes or Daneland or Swedeland or Gardariki[1]," said Kolbiorn Jon's son.

"Or Iceland," amended Erik.

Swain frowned.

"It requires no argument to prove that we cannot fare to all these countries at once," he remarked.

"That is to be accepted as common sense," replied Erik. "But at least you have two choices of a course to steer henceforth."

"How so?" questioned Swain.

"Northwest lies Iceland," answered Erik. "North of east lies Norway and the countries beyond. One way or the other you can go, but not both ways."

"My judgment is that he has fared for Norway," said Swain.

"It is curious how men differ in their opinions when they guess at a venture," said Erik. "My own belief is that he is for Iceland."

"No, no, Erik," returned Swain. "In Iceland he would be at the end of his rope; once there, he could fare no farther. But in Norway he has many resources at his command, friends he has made in the past and means for escaping the country and passing on to other places."

"That is the truth," observed Kolbiorn.

And the other chiefs spoke to the same purpose. Erik shrugged his shoulders.

"I am alone in the view I hold," he said. "Yet I cannot be convinced that you are right. But as I am in the minority I will say no more, and we will do whatever Swain considers wisest."

Swain answered to this that the best course for them to steer was toward the Hjaltlands.[2]

"If Olvir is headed for Norway and the other Norse countries," he said, "he is very likely to stop in the Hjaltlands for water and news of what is happening in those parts. If we hear of him there, it will serve to confirm what we do. If we do not, we shall be no worse for it."

This they did, but when they reached the Hjaltlands the islanders could give them no word of Olvir, although the Hjaltlanders had heard from the Orkneys of the return of Gunni's three galleys from Dyflin and that Swain was keeping to the chase of the outlaws. Some of the chiefs now inclined to Erik's view that their quarry had gone northwest to Iceland, but Swain said—and this none could dispute—that Olvir might well have deemed it advisable to avoid the Hjaltlands in order the better to conceal his whereabouts. So the fleet held on for Norway.

They made excellent progress, and came to Bjorgvin[3] several weeks before mid-Summer. And here again they found only disappointment. Swain was for sailing south to Daneland, when an Iceland merchant named Einar Hardkiopt sailed into port on his annual eastern voyage. It was common talk in the city and haven that Swain sought Olvir Rosta, for, indeed, all men in the north knew of the feud between these two, which had been the cause of countless expeditions and several wars and had wrought more man-scathe than any other one thing, and the story coming to Einar's ears, he waited upon Swain at the inn in which the chief of the Orkneymen dwelt.

"It is not my habit to mingle in other folk's quarrels," he said gruffly, after the ale-horns had been filled and Swain had inquired courteously after the success of his voyage, "but I am no friend to such men as Olvir Rosta, who will set upon honest Norsemen like myself if there do not happen to be outlanders handy for them to ravage. And while it may be unknown to you, my wife, Ragna Kraeling's daughter, is second cousin to you on the distaff side. For these reasons, Swain, I think it right to tell you that I sighted two Norse longships bearing up for Iceland when I was perhaps two days' sail west of the Faroe Isles."

Swain blinked his eyes and swallowed hard.

"This is a kind and friendly act on your part, Einar," he said. "And it has this effect likewise—which you could not have foreseen—that it proves me more or less of a fool. For I have been in the wrong in the views I have held as to Olvir's plans. To show you how valuable I consider your news, I will tell you that I propose to boun my ships by night of tomorrow and sail with the first coming of the next day's light."

---

[1] Russia.

[2] Shetlands.

[3] Bergen.

He stripped a gold ring from his arm and gave it to Einar for a token-gift, albeit the Icelander was at first unwilling to take any reward. And then he sent a messenger for Erik and the two of them sat late over the ale with Einar, questioning him as to the condition of the weather at that time of year in the northern seas and the landfalls of the Iceland coast. Erik, as has been said, was Iceland born and bred, but it had been many years since he had visited his native land, and he was as blithe as Swain for fresh news and the details of the famous families that held power in the several Quarters and controlled opinion in the Althing.

When they ended talk that night Swain gave his hand first to Einar and then to Erik, and as he clasped with Erik, he said:

"You have been wiser than I, little man. Had I taken your advice at the start-off my vengeance would have been completed by now."

But Erik shook his head sadly.

"It was not to be, Swain," he answered. "Much do I wish that you had been right, too, for I like not to think of you faring for Iceland."

Swain laughed in the deep, thunderous way he had, from out the heart of his chest that was round and thick as a barrel beneath the ruddy sweep of his beard.

"Iceland is as good a land for Olvir to die in as another," he replied.

On the following day they bought corn and salt fish and meat and brown Norway ale from Hordaland, and stocked their ships, and as Swain had said, they pulled out from Bjorgvin haven at the dawnbreaking of the second day.

They were not late boun, for many Iceland farers set sail later than they that Summer, but as it chanced, they were plagued by an ill luck which made them the butt of continual storms, and several times blew them a week's sail out of their course. One longship perished in a gale off the Faroes, and with it Thorar Hnefi's son and all his folk, but the other three clung together and lived out the black fate that harassed them, and Summer was barely three-fourths past when the peak of Vatna Jokul loomed in the north and they knew that they were in sight of their goal.

The crews lined the gunwales with eager expectation, for few had sailed that way before, since there was small booty and hard faring to be found Iceland way, and the island folk, like the Norse people of the easterling lands, sought viking luck to the southward.

"I see that this is a warrior's land," commented young Andreas as he craned shoreward like the rest at the harsh gray barrier of the mountains and the narrow strip of green that was wedged between the shore cliffs and the rock-wall of the bleak interior.

"It is no land for weaklings and niddering folk," assented Erik.

"Then shall I secure a return from the candles I lighted in St. Magnus's Church and the old mare Skallagrim sacrificed," said Swain. "It is my thought that Olvir cannot escape me in such a land."

"He will have difficulty in finding a place to flee to for refuge," admitted Erik. "On the one hand, the sea. Against it, the mountains, wherein no living thing grows or thrives, only the ice and fire of the Jokuls. But what is to happen is in the lap of the gods. I would not be so sure of the future if I were you, Swain."

Swain thumped the little, bandy-legged man upon the back.

"Not sure!" he rumbled. "I am as sure that I shall slay Olvir as that I stand here. I know it!"

"There is a price to be paid for all things," grumbled the Icelander.

VIII

SWAIN'S ships came ashore hard by the stead of Thorhall Asgrim's son, and there was great running to and fro of the Icelandfolk when the word was passed that strange dragons had beached in Vyrkiof Haven. For though Iceland saw less of viking ravages than any other part of the world, times had been known when men sought private vengeance regardless of how their measures affected innocent people. There was fighting in the dales and by the seaside for long centuries after Grettir died, and if the feud that sprang from the burning of Njal and his sons was ended before Swain's faring other disputes and differences continued to take their toll.

Therefor Thorhall and the other wealthy men mustered their followers, and came ahorse and on foot to Vyrkiof Haven and formed their ranks upon a hill over against where Swain's men labored on the strand, fetching up goods and gear from the ships.

"These people appear peaceful enough, despite their numbers and their weapons," remarked Thorhall to those with him. "My advice is that I should go to them straightway and ask their intentions."

"That is good advice," agreed his associates.

So he displayed a peace-shield, and descended to the beach with a single house-carl to attend him. Swain marked him afar and knew him at once, for Thorhall was a widely traveled man, who, in his younger days, had traded to many countries and was included among the close friends of Jarl Rognvald whom Swain had served in the Orkneys.

Several of Swain's chiefs were disturbed by the appearance of the Icelandfolk in array, but Swain said they had nothing to be concerned about if Thorhall was present, and Erik supported him in this view. It was Swain and Erik who went out to meet Thorhall, and when Thorhall recognized Swain he was very glad and sent his house-carl to bid the Icelandfolk break from their array.

"We have nothing to fear from Swain Olaf's son," he said. "But I know well who has."

Swain cast down spear and shield as Thorhall drew near, and hand-fasted him warmly in the sight of the two gatherings.

"It is ill coming to a strange land, if there be not a friendly face to smile a welcome," said Swain. "I greet you well, Thorhall."

"Heart's greetings to you, Swain," returned Thorhall. "I had half-suspected your company of hostile intent until I saw your face."

"Why," exclaimed Swain, "if what men say be true Iceland sees little of enemies from the sea."

"They do say true," assented Thorhall, "yet there is a first time in all matters."

"It may be that you had reason to suspect this was a first time," suggested Swain.

Thorhall nodded grimly.

"Seeing that you are who you are, Swain, I will even admit that to be so," he answered.

"Ah," said Swain, "then it may be, too, that you have knowledge of my reason in coming here."

"I know it is not to pay me a visit of courtesy," retorted Thorhall, smiling, "albeit that is not for want of an invitation. It was never your habit to push longship for no profitable purpose, and I take it for granted that you are come hither now upon a serious errand."

"I am," said Swain. "And while it is not my desire to involve you in my personal affairs, I must ask you if I am the first stranger from overseas to land in Iceland this Summer."

Thorhall jerked a pebble from under his foot with the butt of his spear. His brows were knit in thought.

"I will be frank, Swain," he replied at last. "I can not mingle in your private affairs, nor can other of our Icelandfolk, for if we did then would the whole country be upset with broiling and sword-play. But I have guessed already what brings you hither, and in so far as I can, without committing myself or my people, I will aid you, for the reason that I knew you of old and we both shared Jarl Rognvald's friendship. Also, I consider that you are an honorable man and that Olvir Rosta is a wastrel fellow who causes trouble whweverer he goes."

A terrible light flooded Swain's face.

"He is here, then?" he cried.

"He is," answered Thorhall. "He dwells at the farm he held aforetime on Greyfell."

"Is it far?"

"A day's ride," interrupted Erik, who had remained silent throughout their debate. "I know the path."

"It is a dangerous path," said Thorhall, "and Olvir has with him some seven or eight score fellows as wild as himself. They live at free quarters with him."

"I will presently relieve him of their charges," commented Swain.

"I am not one to gainsay you in that," rejoined Thorhall. "But I would have you remember that all the Icelandfolk are not of the same mind with me. Many of our younger men look up to Olvir for his exploits and bloody past. It will be as much as we can do to prevent them from joining Olvir against you. You must walk warily."

"I must walk as I must," answered Swain impatiently. "Olvir is my enemy. I am here to slay him. I will not harm any one who does not side with him. What more can be asked of me?"

"Nothing," said Thorhall, "but I suggest that you come with me to my skalli and set your plan before our most worthy men."

Swain agreed to this, and dispatched Erik to bid the ship-captains finish the disembarkation of his crews. Then he climbed up from the strand with Thorhall, and they walked to Thorhall's hall through curious groups of the Icelandfolk. Other chiefs and men of prominence joined them as they walked, so that when they reached the skalli, in a vale protected from the sea-winds, there were twenty or more in their company. Thorhall ushered them all inside, and the thralls and servingmen brought in ale. After the horns had been filled Thorhall repeated what Swain had said to him on the beach, and inquired if any man present desired to question Swain.

One of the younger chiefs—his name was Sigurd Gussi's son, and he dwelt in the Greyfell vales—spoke up.

"It seems to me that you propose to go against Olvir with twice as many men as he has, Swain."

"I have many times offered to fight Olvir, man to man, ship to ship or with any equal number of combatants," answered Swain coldly.

"Nevertheless, now you are to attack him with an overwhelming force," argued Sigurd.

"It does not matter," said Swain. "He will not stand before me unless he must. That is not Olvir's way."

"Do you say that he is afraid to fight?" cried Sigurd.

"I say that he is afraid to fight me if he can help it," said Swain carelessly. "He knows I shall be his bane."

Sigurd addressed himself to the company.

"Swain is an outlander," he declared. "Olvir Rosta, whatever we may think of him, has dwelt before in Iceland, and to many of us he is a friend. I do not consider it worthy for us to suffer Swain to attack Olvir with twice as many men as Olvir can raise from his own following. Either Swain should be required to leave some of his men behind or he should be sent away."

"Is it your suggestion, Sigurd, that we should enter this quarrel between Swain and Olvir?" inquired Thorhall.

A murmur of opposition rose from the ranks of the older men.

"No, no!" "This is no quarrel of ours." "No Icelandfolk in an outland feud." "Let them fight it out alone."

Sigurd flushed with temper.

"My suggestion is that we refuse to permit Swain to do an injustice to Olvir in our midst," he flared.

Several men chuckled openly at this.

"Since when has Olvir become an apostle of justice?" asked Thorhall.

And another chief—he was Brusi Hakon's son of the Sea Side—called out:

"Any man who has been oversea knows of Olvir Rosta. How got he to be dubbed 'Roysterer,' do you think, Sigurd? Why should we any of us risk our lives on his behalf?"

"Or in Swain's behalf, either?" cried a third man.

"I ask nobody to risk his life for me," said Swain in reply to this. "I do not even desire to have a guide to conduct me to Olvir's stead. All I ask is that those of your folk who have it to spare sell me food and ale for my men at whatever rate you deem equitable."

A number of men exclaimed that this was a fair and honorable offer, but Sigurd rose, his face flaming more than ever.

"Have it as you will," he said. "I see plainly that all here save myself are enemies of Olvir. But I will not have it said of me that I participated in the counsels of those who betrayed an Icelander to an outlander."

And he flung himself from the room.

"I am sorry that this has occurred," said Swain when he had gone. "I have no intention of causing trouble for any one who does not aid Olvir, and I never thought——"

"Do not be disturbed," Thorhall cut him off. "The rest of us appreciate your motives, and I believe we shall be able to restrain most of the young men. Some of them may go to Olvir's assistance, but you must be lenient if they do, and do them as little scathe as possible. They are led astray by mistaken admiration for a man we know to be a scoundrel."

"That is fairly spoken," answered Swain.

"But you must not read more into what I say than I mean," went on Thorhall. "We will suffer you to land with all your men, and sell you food and drink, and place no hindrance in the way of your marching to Olvir's stead, and if you slay him or he slays you we will not interfere either way. But you must agree to wreak no harm to any man's property, and when you have done what you have come to do—or failed to do it, as your luck falls—you must depart from the country as quickly as possible, lest more trouble be caused by your deeds."

"It is not my purpose to delay," answered Swain. "I was late boun for Iceland, as you must perceive, and if I am to fare Orkneyward before Winter I have ample cause for haste."

"Ah, but it is not the coming of Winter alone which should speed you," said Thorhall. "There will be grave discussion of what my friends and I have decided here, and the folk of other Quarters and districts will not all agree with us of the Bishop's Tongue Dales. Some one will move the issue in the Althing or cry for a levy against you, and if you were here then we should be put to it to save you from paying heavy man-bote or outlawry or, perhaps, death, itself. Olvir has friends, as Sigurd showed you, and he has more friends amongst those who know of him only by repute than here where we see something of the evil life he leads. For your own good I urge you to achieve your object quickly, and go."

"You have acted as becomes honorable men," answered Swain, "and in a spirit of friendship. I will endeavor to conduct my affairs so as to do you no prejudice."

And after giving them such late news as he had heard in Bjorgvin and other parts oversea he departed to rejoin his men on the strand.

IX

WHEN Swain returned to Vyrkiof Haven he found the three longships drawn up, safe and snug, the war-gear ashore and the crews gathered around fires broiling mutton which Andreas had purchased from a farmer whose flock grazed on the tough grass of the seaward fields. He called to him Andreas, Erik, Havard and Kolbiorn and explained to them the upshot of his discussion with Thorhall and the other Bishop's Tongue men.

"What does it matter whether the Icelanders favor Olvir or not?" exclaimed Andreas. "We are here. Olvir is where Erik can teach us to reach him. That is enough. I hear the ravens screaming over those mountains."

And he pointed his sword toward the savage peaks that cluttered the purpling skyline. The twilight of the day was deepening. The fires of Hecla already showed faintly crimson in the dusk. Torfa Jokul hulked monstrously in the north.

"In the old days men said the Norns made their homes in Iceland's wilderness," said Havard, shuddering. "There is a place where warriors might step easily from earth to Valhalla."

"It is a warrior's country," answered Andreas, repeating the phrase he had used on *Deathbringer's* deck. "I do not wonder at the might of Iceland's champions now that I have seen where they are bred. It is a challenge to us. Let us go up and prove ourselves worthy to be spoken of with Grettir and Skarphedin and Flosi."

"You are over anxious for the battle, youngling," said Swain kindly. "It is not for you to offer counsel before grown men have spoken."

"Yet he speaks sensibly, though he be fey," said Erik.

Swain looked closely at the little Icelander.

"Fey?" he repeated. "What is this, Erik? Who is fey? The boy——"

Erik shook his head stubbornly.

"Never ask me what I can not answer. He has spoken after the manner of those who are fey. But nevertheless, as I have said, he speaks sensibly. What you have told us indicates that we should lose no time in going against Olvir. His friends will send him warning that we have landed, and as it is, we can not hope to surprize him; but perhaps we can reach him soon enough to prevent him from flying to a place where we should have more difficulty in coming at him."

"Yes, yes," murmured Andreas eagerly.

"What do you say?" Swain asked of Havard and Kolbiorn.

"It is as Erik says," they replied.

Swain pulled his beard reflectively.

"I, too, have an inclination to agree with the little man," he said. "Yet—" he paused and stared off at the serrated ridge of the mountains, their jagged rock-teeth biting at the sky like the uplifted jaws of some enormous monster of titanic voracity—"yet, there is something within me says to pause."

"What?" clamored Andreas.

"No, how can I say?" returned Swain.

"I am not given to reluctance in offering battle, as all men know."

"If you delay," said Andreas, "not only may Olvir flee from us to hiding in the rock deserts, but if his Iceland friends rally to him they may enable him to master us."

"That is the plain truth," agreed Erik.

Still Swain pondered. His eyes were fixed upon a distant ridge whereon a last vibrant ray of sunlight was turned to a pale pink on the broad breast of a glacier that coiled across the land like some icy serpent.

"I would never have believed it had a man warned me!" he muttered, almost to himself. "It is not fear. But what is it? No, I should be niddering did I delay my vengeance. My dead would cry out against me. What must be, will be."

"If a man is fey, he is fey," spoke up Erik softly. "Only the gods can know."

Andreas glowered sulkily at both of them.

"You talk like old women," he rasped. "Fey? I am as keen for battle as any, and as little touched by foreboding. If we carried Dyflin in face of treachery, have we anything to fear from Olvir with half our numbers? March at once, and we may surprize him in his bed."

But Erik shook his head, and would have moved away.

"It is too late for surprize," he said. "A horse can reach Greyfell's upper slopes long before men on foot tramping an unfamiliar path."

Scowling, Swain gripped the little Icelander by the arm.

"What did you mean when you said he was fey? Speak, Erik! When did you have the sight?"

Again Erik shook his head. His leathery face was impassive under its sparse, grizzled thatch of beard.

"How can I answer, Swain? A man hears a thing or sees it, and without his reckoning how, he seems to feel over and beyond it into the depths of time."

Swain's eyes shifted from the raw pile of mountains in front of them to the placidly heaving sea—and finally, to his son, alert, vigorous, glowing with life and brave energy.

"I am glad I left Olaf in Gairsey," he said slowly.

His manner changed abruptly. He became in an instant all harsh readiness.

"Call up the men! Erik, I give it to you to muster the bowmen. Havard and Kolbiorn and I will each lead a company of spearmen. Andreas, do you bide beside me. With speed, all! Let us finish this business by tomorrow's night."

The fires were hurriedly stamped out. A dozen older men, backsore from rowing-benches, were told off for ship-keepers. The necessary stores were distributed. Then the long column of the Orkneymen wound up the bluff above the strand and straightened out across the dimming hollow of the river valley. Men and women and children clustered in front of the steads to watch it pass, silent, wondering. The word already had gone forth.

"This is a private vengeance. Let them be."

But there was a rustle of excitement from end to end of the Bishop's Tongue Dales, a rustle that spread and spread to the east and the west and the North. This was a greater vengeance than the oldest skald could remember, greater even than the old sagas told of, the greatest since Flosi Thord's son had ridden from Swinefell to the Althing with six score friends at his back to face the suit of Kari Solmund's son for Njal's burning.

That was a bright night. The stars shone with the clear sparkle of the far north, and later the moon gleamed in the phase of its last quarter. So far as Thorhall's skalli the road was clearly outlined, and Thorhall, himself, was at his stead-gate to whisper a warning in Swain's ear.

"It is more than I promised," he said, "but you should know that Sigurd rode north an hour past. You do well to tread his heels. Luck go with you!"

Swain thanked him, and strode on. They mounted from the valley, higher and higher, as the country sloped up from the sea-level. The houses and steads became less frequent. For a while they might know by the pricks of the candles in the darkness whenever they came to a human habitation; but afterward it was the barking of dogs that gave them notice men were near, for the folk were all abed.

ONCE, near midnight, Erik missed his way, and stopped at a farm to inquire. The man who answered his knock peered out in the moonlight at the ridge of helmets, at the spear-heads twinkling in the starshine.

"What is this?" he gasped. "Is the king come from Bjorgvin?"

"We are the Orkneyfolk," answered Erik. "We go upon a private vengeance. None of the Icelandfolk have cause to fear us."

The farmer crossed himself.

"Ho, it is Olvir Rosta you seek," he said. "I know. Well, it is to be seen you are bad folk to cross."

Beyond here they left the horse-path they had followed and took to a sheep-track, which threaded the tangled vitals of the foothills. The distant fire on Hecla was a landmark for them. Erik kept it over his right shoulder, and pressed on. When the dawn glow commenced to throb in the east he allowed Swain to halt on the verge of the shoulder of Swinefell, and rest their weary followers. But they resumed the march as soon as it was light. Swain, preoccupied, puzzled by the feeling of emptiness in the triumph he knew to be at hand, led the column, as tireless as the sturdiest young house-carl at his back, wearing down even the restless vitality of Andreas, beside him.

They could see now where they were. The mass of Torfa Jokul towered to their right, ahead. Undulating before them was the grassy stretch of Greyfell. As they topped a ridge the distant barking of a dog reached their ears, and Swain's keen eyes glimpsed a figure that darted from an eminence and disappeared in a patch of dwarf trees.

"One of Olvir's lookouts," grunted Erik. "He is prepared for us."

"We knew he should be," grunted Swain in answer.

But he waved forward a dozen bowmen to make certain there was no ambush laid for them. Andreas sprang to accompany the scouts, and Swain half-raised his hand to check the boy, but dropped it again to his side.

"What must be, will be," he muttered.

Erik's voice rumbled back—

"Only the fool kicks at the footstool of the gods."

They continued in silence. The patch of trees was deserted; their own men had passed it. On the farther side they opened out a considerable valley, a broad slash in the upheaved surface of Greyfell. A little river foamed, tumultuously shallow, across their line of march. Beyond it showed the weatherworn buildings of a steading, and a patchwork of tilled fields. Between river and buildings was drawn up a body of men, rather more than half as numerous as Swain's company.

Swain stopped for a moment, and inhaled a deep breath. His feeling of satisfaction, of conviction in the attainment of the vengeance he had striven for since his youth, had returned. His eye traveled over the surrounding country. In back of the steading the farther lip of the valley swelled to meet the bulge of a foothill. After that crag was heaped on crag until the whole culminated in a welter of pinnacles that defied the approach of anything without wings.

Swain's nostrils expanded; his chest swelled; involuntarily, he drew his sword.

"As I thought," he said aloud. "He cannot escape."

Erik's eyes bored into Swain's.

"Who, Swain?"

Startled, Swain's gaze swerved to the Icelander's. A mist of anger blinded him; his word heaved in air.

"Are you mocking me?" he roared in his bull's voice. "I will cleave you to the chin!"

Erik never flinched. His beady black eyes met Swain's steadily.

"You will yet have need of your steel," he answered. "It is a poor beginning to a fight to slay your best friend."

"Friend!" snorted Swain. "You are a foul croaker!"

"Not so," replied Erik. "I am one who seeks to save you from bitter ruth—yes, and it may be worse."

Swain lowered his blade.

"What is this help you prate of?" he demanded gruffly.

Erik drew him to one side, out of earshot of the front files of their people, who had beheld dumfounded the apparent breach between the chief and his forecastle man.

"It is this way, Swain," he began, and paused uncomfortably.

"Yes, yes," replied Swain. "But what way?"

A voice hailed them from mid-way of the sloping valley wall, a fresh, young voice, brimful of confidence and the zest of impending conflict. Swain glanced down, nodded impatiently and returned his attention to Erik.

"Yes," he said again. "What way?"

"Why, see you, Swain," the little Icelander plunged desperately. "There is Olvir."

"I can see that much," Swain admitted grimly.

"We have him," Erik opened his fist and shut it again. "Like that! He can never get far in this country. If he could have, be sure he would have done so by now. So, I say, we have him safe. But there is no reason why you or Andreas should leap into the slaughter I see ahead. We can catch Olvir for you, past doubt, and then you can use him as you please."

Swain's brows knit; his cold, blue eyes blazed with a sudden heat.

"I am to skulk behind the shield-wall?" he asked, quietly menacing.

"No, no," cried Erik. "It is only that—Well, what should we do if harm befell you? And it is needless! When we catch Olvir you can make him fight you, man to man, for his life. But there is no cause for you to rush into the weapon-broil."

Swain dropped a heavy hand upon Erik's shoulder; the Icelander's bandy legs quivered under the pressure, but he contrived to stand straight.

"You mean well, Erik," boomed Swain; "but you should know I am no man to strike over another's shoulder. Get forward with your bowmen."

"But Andreas!" pleaded Erik. "Keep him back. He is rash and inexperienced. This will be a stern clash. Those are old viking fellows yonder. Look at the array of their shield-wall!"

Swain's gaze strayed down the hillside to where his son was waving them on.

"Remember," pressed the Icelander, "there will be no time to throw your shield over him. And if he——"

Swain looked up sternly.

"No!" he answered. "What did you, yourself say? 'If a man is fey, he is fey.' "

"But I am no spaeman! Who am I to claim foreknowledge?"

"I would accept your foreboding before many a seer's," replied Swain. "No, the boy must take his chance. Let the gods decide."

And he added bitterly—

"I have paid them sufficiently well!"

X

A SPATTER of arrows at long range that rapped upon interposed shields. Shouts of derision from both sides. Then Olvir's squat, solid figure stood forward from the shield-wall across the river.

"Ho, Swain!" he called. "Will you try holmgang[1] with me?"

Swain desisted from his task of forming a V-shaped shield-wall of attack, and advanced to the near bank.

"I have many times offered to abide judgment by combat with you," he replied in some surprize.

"But you fear me now, it seems," gibed Olvir.

Swain regarded him without answering.

"Come," urged Olvir. "I will go farther. I will first fight your whelp there. That will give you a chance of avoiding me."

Andreas rushed to his father's side.

"Let me slay the boaster," he cried. "I can make short work of him."

"Ho, ho," laughed Olvir. "Hear the cockerel crow! Boy, I could break you with my bare hands in holmgang."

"I will meet you weaponless," fumed Andreas. "You dwarf! I will tear one limb from the other."

"Ho, ho, ho!" bellowed Olvir. "Brave talk! But Swain is silent. He thinks. He considers if his men will laugh behind their shields to see him thrust forward the youngling in his place."

Swain spoke.

"Yes, I am considering, Olvir. I am considering why you, who have feared to face me, if you could help it, since I bested you in our youth on Morkaorsbakki, are now so eager to test my sword."

Olvir lifted the finely-balanced ax he carried, its haft of polished, resilient horn, curving to give full impetus to the strokes of the flaring head.

"Skulltapper here has been whispering to me," he answered. "It has been my policy to await the right moment when you could not escape me. That moment has come. You are delivered into my hands, Swain. Whatever course you take, your death is decreed."

Swain contemplated the scanty ranks of Olvir's followers.

"Your craft must outweigh your inferiority, then," he remarked.

"It does," replied Olvir.

And the outlaw's lips parted in a grimace which showed the long, yellow fangs that jutted wolflike through his beard.

"You speak of trying holmgang," said Swain. "Where is the holm?"

Olvir pointed with his spear to a flat rock that rose from the middle of the rivulet, perhaps ten or twelve ells[1] from either bank. It was barely large enough to accomodate two men. Idly, too, Swain noted that its surface showed two colors, one the natural dull gray, the other a gleaming, darker tinge.

---

[1] Single combat to the death on an islet.

Erik sidled up to him.

"There is trickery in this, Swain," muttered the Icelander. "Refuse him."

But even as Erik spoke Olvir ran forward and bounded into the air in a graceful leap which carried him across the gap between his side of the river and the rock. He landed easily on the dull, gray patch, staggered a moment and stood erect.

"I am waiting, Swain," he called. "Which is it to be, you or the cub?"

Andreas started to push past his father.

"Is he to insult us without punishment?" he growled.

But Swain seized the boy by the arm, and tossed him a spear's length away.

"Keep your place," he roared. "It is for me to slay Olvir!"

"No, no," protested Erik. "There is a trick—depend upon it, there is a trick. Hold, Swain!"

Swain flung off his grasp.

"This is better than I had hoped," he shouted. "Keep back, Erik! Let none of our men go forward until I have made ravens' meat of Olvir."

"He will strike you as you land," cried the Icelander.

"I do not fear his blows," returned Swain.

And he took a short run, and launched himself from the bank as Olvir had done. Erik snatched a bow from a man close by, and called out—

"If you lift weapon, Olvir, I loose!"

But Olvir, crouched behind his shield, which covered him to the knees, made no attempt to raise his spear or clutch at the ax hanging by a thong from his neck; all his attention was concentrated upon Swain's body as it sped forward and up across the boulder-strewn torrent, knees drawn high and arms flung wide to secure the greatest distance. Erik, with arrow on string, could see no excuse to loose. Something was wrong, the little Icelander was sure. Yet what? There was no sign of trickery.

A sudden shout rose from both riverbanks, exultation from one side, fear from the other. Swain's feet, meeting the gleaming rock surface, shot out from under him. He measured his length with a clang of weapons and armor, and slid prostrate to Olvir's half of the holm. The outlaw's spear flashed out. Down drove the keen point, fair for Swain's side. No links could withstand that thrust. Erik loosed his arrow, and cursed as he realized he could do no more than pierce Olvir's shield.

But another shout went up. Young Andreas had duplicated his father's leap. His lithe body was hurtling through the air like a rubber ball. Olvir, hearing the shout, looked up, hesitated—and in that moment of grace Swain twisted over and over and rolled head first into the water that raced along shoulder-deep.

Andreas dropped on the rock as his father had, but he contrived so to balance himself as to slide across the gleaming surface without a tumble. He smashed squarely into Olvir, who fended the boy off with his shield and feinted a spear-stab at the throat. Andreas thrust back for Olvir's groin, but the outlaw, standing secure, had no trouble in turning it aside, and countered by driving his shield into his opponent's. Involuntarily, Andreas stepped back. The slippery covering of the nearer half of the rock pulled his feet from under him, and as he crashed down, Olvir reached over and thrust up under the lower edge of his mail-shirt. The spear-head ripped through groin and bowels, and Andreas died there without a groan.

Olvir tore out the death-spear and stepped back to the far edge of the rock. Swain had swum with the current down-stream, making for the bank his men held, and Olvir cast the spear at his head, bobbing on the water. It struck Swain's helm a ringing blow, and tore it from his head; but Swain recovered the helm before it could sink and he also seized the spear.

"That for you, Swain!" shouted Olvir. "The whelp died first, after all."

Now, so swift had been the action on the rock and so brisk the interplay of figures that no man on either side had raised a weapon since Erik loosed his futile arrow. But at Olvir's shout the Icelander led a rush of men into the river, and Swain, himself, rearing up from the stream, cast back the spear with such true aim and force that it sped through Olvir's shield and pinned together shield and arm that held it. Another would have been hindered by this, but not so Olvir. He pulled the spear free, and threw it at Erik, who dodged it, and it was the bane of the next man behind the little Icelander.

---

[1] The Norse ell was about two feet.

Then Olvir caught up his ax in his hand, and with it hewed the head from dead Andreas at his feet, and he took the head by its long locks and tossed it at Swain who was beginning to forge across to the far bank of the river.

"A token of my regard, Swain," he called. "But it is an indication of the luck you had that you escaped the slide I greased for you."

With that he slung his shield around on his back, and leaped for the far bank, with no more than two steps to aid him. And since that day men have called the place Olvir's Leap. Spears and arrows rained after him, but he gained the bank, unharmed and ran to join his people who were coming to dispute the crossing with the Orkneyfolk.

Swain was the first of the Orkneyfolk to pass the river, and he was fearsome to look upon, dripping with the water, and his eyes coldly ablaze and a light in his face that made men shiver to behold. He had his sword out as he came to land, and without waiting for any of his men to join him he ran after Olvir Rosta and sought to bring him to battle; but this was not to Olvir's fancy, and the Roysterer fled behind the protection of the shield-wall his outlaws lapped for him.

Never a word said Swain, but he sprang at the shield-wall with whirling sword, heedless of the blows that were aimed at him. Some of them he parried with his own blade; some he met with his shield; some he dodged or leaped over. There was no stopping him. Whenever his sword fell, a man died. He hewed through the tough lindenwood of the shields, through the steel of the byrnies, through the plate of the helms, through ax-helve and spear-shaft and sword-guard. And about him there was a heap of corpses, and the blood running in pools.

Men say but for him Olvir's folk would have reached the river-bank in time to meet the Orkneymen as Erik led them from the water, and in that case it might have gone hard with Swain's people, for the bank was steep so that men on the dry land held a great advantage over men striking up from the river-bed. But Swain stayed the rush of the outlaws long enough for Erik and the leaders of the Orkneyfolk to come to his side, and after that it became a question how many of Olvir's men might escape the sore scathe they suffered.

Against their center raged Swain and Erik; Havard and Kolbiorn hammered at their wings. They were pinched back into the curve of an ax-blade, then into a huge U and at last into a circle. Swain thought he had them fast when his ship-captains welded the outer ring, but he reckoned without Olvir's subtle wits. The Roysterer drew in his people, massed them compactly, and set them to retreating with a peculiar turning movement that was most disconcerting. They whirled like a wheel of shielded men, and the Orkneyfolk were dazed by the trick. It was baffling to strike at one man, and the next moment have another step into his place to counter the blow.

Only stout carls, hardened to battle, desperate with the knowledge that no quarter was offered them, could have done it. Wheeling, slashing, pausing, yielding, recovering again, the shield-ring forced a way over the rough ground, avoided a plantation of trees and approached closer the enclosure of the steading. In the midst of the ring Olvir nursed the slow retreat. His eye was quick to see the crevice in the ranks that might become a gap, and albeit he refused to meet Swain he was not averse to performing his share against the common men.

Swain was mad with rage. His ruddy beard was flecked with the foam that flew from his lips. He no longer made any pretense of fending against attacks. His shield he had cast aside in splinters. He pounded into the outlaws' shield-ring with the frantic wrath of a berserk of the old days, and the bravest sea-ravager of the lot felt for him the same reasonless, frantic fear that the berserk always inspired.

His voice a croak in his throat, he called Olvir again and again, bidding him stand forth and prove his manhood. It was he who broke the shield-ring, jumping the outer rank and bringing the turmoil of unexpected death inside the circle. Men drew away from him instinctively, and the disruption created an opportunity which Erik was not slow to seize. The little Icelander hewed a gap two men wide with his own clever ax and so won to Swain's back.

The shield-ring split asunder; men flew right and left, and the Orkneyfolk after them. What had been an ordered battle became a series of flights and pursuits, isolated stands of little groups. But Olvir was not one of those who died with the savage ferocity of wild beasts, blaspheming as they sank to earth, slaying and maiming with the last ebb of strength in hand and wrist. The Roysterer fled the field the moment the shield-ring was shattered, a dozen men at his side. They ran into the stead yard, and headed for the stables; and Swain, with Erik and a score of others, ran after him.

Beside the stables three horses were tethered, and there was a brief struggle for these in the ranks of Olvir's party. Olvir, himself, stabbed one man who had seized a bridle; two other fellows won clear; and the three were off. The luckless ones who were abandoned vaulted a fence and disappeared in a corn-field. Swain sent a few men after them, for he was resolved to exterminate the outlaws, and then made sure there were no horses in the stable.

"Olvir has a clean start of us, it seems," said Erik, peering under his arm at the empty stalls.

"We can climb on foot wherever horses can," answered Swain curtly. "Rally a score of lusty fellows to go with us."

And he stared curiously after the three figures that showed incredibly small against the stark barrier of the mountains as they galloped over the fell.

"Twice Olvir has tricked himself out of my hands," he murmured; "but where will he find tallow to grease rocks or foolish folk to die for him on the Jokul's flanks?"

XI

UNDER the first of the beetling precipices of the Jokul Swain's folk came upon the squashed bodies of a man and a horse. Two miles farther on, they encountered another foundered beast, and stretched across a rock, a second man cut down from shoulder to waist.

"Olvir required a fresh horse," grinned Erik, "Humph, those who served him paid a stiff price."

"His price is yet to be paid," growled Swain.

They pressed on. Long since they had lost sight of green fields and meadows. The sweep of Greyfell was far below them. On every hand lifted the naked cliffs, and their footing was over cold lava flows, knife-edged wherever the molten stuff had boiled out of a flat mold.

There was no path, only such footing as the rocks afforded. At intervals they found traces to show that Olvir's horse had stumbled or fallen, clots of blood and hair daubed on sharp ridges along the way. The last of these places was where a ravine branched, and Erik whistled low as he marked the course the fugitive had chosen.

"He is cunning, this Olvir," exclaimed the little man. "See, where he is gone, Swain!"

"It means nothing to me whither he goes," replied Swain coldly. "Soon or late, we shall overtake him."

"It will be soon now," answered Erik. "He has over-reached himself for very cunning. This way he follows now leads down between the Jokul and Hecla, and if he had the strength to continue and the luck to escape us it would fetch him out upon East Side. But when I was a boy I discovered a short-cut over the cliffs which no horse could take. It will bring us squarely across his path."

"That is well," said Swain. "But let us not waste time in talk."

Erik led them almost straight up the back-slanting face of the cliffs, crawling from shelf to shelf and from crevice to crevice. One man lost his grip, and pitched down five hundred ells, and so got his death; but the rest won safe to the top, and then fared east and south over a vast saddle of rock that was one of the buttresses of the Jokul. Mid-afternoon saw them in a narrow valley through which dashed a brooklet of snow water, which gave life to a cluster of bushes and two or three gnarled, stunted trees.

Erik examined the ground carefully upon both sides of the brook.

"Olvir has not been here yet," he announced. "Indeed, I know of no way he could have traveled faster than we, since his path must have been thrice as long."

"Must he, in truth, pass this way?" asked Swain.

"Unless he elects to turn back, Swain. Also, this is the only water, and by now he must be dry from thirst, and his horse, as well."

Swain frowned gloomily.

"My wish is that we should surprize him," he said. "And if any man so much as scratches him in the taking, that man I will slay myself."

Erik shrugged his shoulders.

"All this is easily said, Swain, but Olvir is a warrior of prowess, and he still has his ax."

"It can be done," answered Swain shortly. "Do you all cut branches from the trees and bushes. When I give the word, fall upon him together and hold him down with the branches. What happens afterward is my business."

Erik said that it should be so, and when they had all provided themselves with branches they sought shelter in the bushes by the bank of the little stream and waited. To Erik and the rest it seemed a long time, but Swain never so much as stirred, nor did his eyes stray up the valley in the direction from which Olvir must come—not even when a clatter of stones and the panting of a tired horse gave warning the outlaw was at hand.

Olvir walked around a shoulder in the hillside, leading the horse by the bridle. His ax hung from his neck by its thong; his shield was gone; his left arm, which Swain's spear had pierced, was bound with a cloth. He was bloodstained and dusty and soiled with the foam from the horse, but he walked with unstemmed vigor.

He let the horse drink first, then stooped to drink, himself. And as he stooped, Swain stood erect, and tossed across his back a heavy tree bough. Olvir started up, displacing the bough, but the rest of Swain's men darted forward, and a dozen boughs and branches poked into his face, fell between his legs, prodded his body. He caught at his ax, and cut the arm off a man who ventured too close, and that man died. Yet it was of no avail, for in striking at that man he laid himself open in the rear and he was pushed over and the ax torn from his grasp as he lay on the ground.

His captors dragged him to his feet, and Swain stepped in front of him.

"It seems your luck has turned, Olvir," said Swain heavily.

"The man who speaks of luck that has turned is he who has known ill luck," retorted Olvir.

"You have been the bane of many of my family," acknowledged Swain. "That is well-known."

"The last I slew no later than this morning," rejoined Olvir.

"Yes, the *last*," said Swain. "And I have a son left, Olvir. When I die my name will continue. In an hour's time there will be no more than a memory of you."

Olvir's lips drew back, so that his teeth stood out like the tushes of a cornered wolf, shining and yellow against the black of his beard.

"You will have need of that last son," he jeered. "For I have a feeling that I shall not be the last one to die in our feud. Yes, yes, Swain, it was wise of you to leave one son at home. Had he been here he would not have escaped me. Frakork, my grandmother, whom you slew, and who had foreknowledge and the power of the future, told me from my coming to manhood I was born to be the death of your stock. Heh! If I died this moment no man could say I had not fulfilled my destiny. You are a noted warrior, Swain, but you can not set off slaying against slaying in your account with me. The odds are double in my favor, and if I die it will not alter it, for I take two with me."

Erik sidled up to Swain.

"Let us burn him," he suggested. "He has a foul tongue, and has lived too long."

"Not so," answered Swain. "I will have him released."

Amazed, the house-carls relaxed their grip upon the outlaw's arms. Olvir, too, looked at his enemy with undisguised astonishment, which did not decrease when Swain picked up his ax from the ground and offered it to him.

"Take it," bade Swain with a touch of impatience.

And as Olvir's hand stretched out, almost fearfully, as if he suspected some new form of torture, Swain added:

"I have never been able to get you to meet me since we fought in our boyhood on Morkaorsbakki. It is my purpose to see if I can beat you today as I did then."

"It is you who are fey, now, Swain!" cried Erik. "Take thought in your madness. You have been a good lord to me, and I would not see you put your life to needless risk."

"Stand back, Erik," answered Swain. "And heed what I say. Give Olvir weapon-room, and should he best me, remember, he is to depart free and unscathed. I shall put his boastings to the proof."

"Now do I know you are fey!" repeated Erik, wringing his hands; and the rest of Swain's folk muttered uneasily amongst themselves.

"I know what I do," said Swain. "Do you think I might go to my grave in comfort without having proved I could slay Olvir Rosta?"

A wicked light flared in Olvir's swart face. He snatched the ax from Swain's hand, and in the same breath leaped backward his own length. The great weapon whirred in a glittering arc around his head, and an animal cry of hatred escaped his lips.

"A mating, Swain!" he cried. "Skull-tapper claims a bridegroom."

But Swain's answer was to spring at him with the sudden, vibrant ferocity of a wolf-hound. Swain's sword flashed down, and Olvir plunged sidewise to dodge it. Then the outlaw was on his feet again, and ran in to close quarters, his ax chopping in quick, lightning-fast strokes, from right to left, up and down, down and up, from left to right. Swain gave ground before him, guarded, fended, warily, watching the opportunity for a counter-attack. When he, in turn, dashed forward, Olvir side-stepped and retreated.

Swain pressed the advantage, fearlessly, almost recklessly, as if he was entirely contemptuous of his foe, and Olvir was not slow to understand this. The sword rang and hammered upon Olvir's helm and mailed shoulders, drew blood through a weak link in the outlaw's byrnie. And Olvir affected to stagger and sway, the ax drooping in his hand. Up went Swain's sword for the slashing overhead stroke from left to right which would lop off head and shoulder with it. In pecked Olvir's ax for Swain's middle, and Swain escaped it by the margin of a mighty leap. As it was the upper horn of the ax-blade ripped a long gash in his left leg and his breeches hung in bloody strings and rags.

Olvir's wolf-grin became a howl of satisfaction.

"I have lamed you, Swain! Next it shall be your head."

Swain made no answer, but the grim confidence in his face was undiminished. He fought on as recklessly as ever, forcing the fighting, if anything, seeking close quarters, parrying Olvir's strokes with his blade or avoiding them by almost imperceptible movements of head and limbs. He limped slightly, but not enough to bother him.

It was Olvir who stepped back finally, short of breath, and Swain, instead of following him up, dropped sword-point to the ground and leaned on the hilt, silently watchful.

"Suffer us to slay him with spears, Swain," called Erik from where the house-carls watched. "We can compass it without scathe to ourselves."

"He is mine," answered Swain, never taking his eyes from Olvir's face.

The wolfish grin again contorted the outlaw's mouth.

"No, no, you are mine, Swain," he cried. "I shall have you. Frakork promised you to me!"

And in he bounded with whirling ax. Swain leaped to meet him, and their blades hammered together, disengaged. Then Swain became a steel-tipped tempest, an inhuman force. The watchers held their breaths and marveled at his ceaseless rain of blows. Olvir abandoned thought of attack, and tried only to defend himself. The ax-blade was a shield, and no more, and sometimes the sword's edge bit over it, and nicked Olvir in leg and shoulder. He tried to leap away, but which ever way he leaped, Swain came after him.

The end was so abrupt that no man saw how it happened. Swain dealt a shower of blows, and one of these Olvir was obliged to ward with his ax-helve. The keen blade of Swain's sword shore through the horn a foot above the hand-grip, and the ax-head dropped to the ground. Olvir stood motionless for an instant, bewildered by the swiftness with which fate had struck; and in the space of that instant Swain's sword whistled down upon his bare neck.

The black-bearded head seemed to spring up into the air on the torrent of blood that spouted from the severed veins. The body tottered, with clutching hands, took a step backward and collapsed. The head rolled across the ground to within an ell of where Swain stood, and as it came to rest, the tormented lips snarled back, the yellow tushes ground apart and the basilisk eyes glared in a last message of hatred.

Some of the men who were there say that the head spoke a single word—

"Mine!"

The helm had tumbled from it, and Swain lifted it by the hair and carried it to the horse which was cropping grass unconcernedly at the far end of the glade. The horse would have shied from it, but presently Swain succeeded in knotting it by the hair to the saddlebow; and then he called out to Erik and the rest of his company.

"The work is done," he said. "We have a long journey to do."

"It is late, Swain," replied Erik. "The men are weary, and you have a raw wound. We had best lie here tonight."

"No," said Swain. "We return to Greyfell tonight. I must see to the raising of a fit hough for Andreas."

"But what do you do with Olvir's head?" asked Erik. "It is an ill-looking thing."

Before Swain answered he started to mount the horse, and the beast shied again, for the bloody head bobbed up and down upon its flank and the scent of the blood maddened it. Erik came to his side and held the bridle, and Swain climbed stiffly into the saddle. Yet as Erik stepped away the horse reared, and the head swung against Swain's thigh, and one of the long, yellow eye-teeth caught in the wound Olvir's ax had made. Swain pushed it from him, and knotted it tighter to the saddlehorn.

"It is an ill-looking thing, as you say," he replied, gathering the reins in his hand, "and it seems to preserve an enmity for me. I shall put it under Andreas's feet in the hough we will build where Olvir's stead is now."

But Erik shuddered.

"There is bad luck in a head that bites after death," he said. "Let me bury it where it can wreak no more harm."

"Good luck or bad luck, it will fall out as the gods have willed," returned Swain; "and having had my vengeance I will accept whatever befalls me."

"Here is another man whose speech betrays him fey," cried Erik.

"I am no more fey than you, Erik," answered Swain; "and the proof is that you foretold harm of my meeting with Olvir, but I slew him as I knew I should, and our feud is ended."

"Thy dog if it be so, O Christ!" exclaimed Erik. "And Thor's honor, also!"

XII

THEY traveled all through that night, for Swain would not permit them to halt longer than was necessary to make sure of the rock path, and they came to Olvir's stead on Greyfell about the time of their arrival the morning before. As Erik helped Swain to dismount he perceived that Swain's leg was red and swollen and that his eyes shone with an unearthly light.

"You are spent, Swain," he said. "You must rest, and I will make a poultice for your wound."

But Swain shook his head.

"Summon the men," he answered.

Havard and Kolbiorn and the other chiefs greeted him warmly, and they showed him Andreas's body, with the head that had been recovered from the river, stretched upon a bed in the hall of Olvir's skalli.

"You have done well," said Swain.

And he took Olvir's head which he still carried, and placed it under his son's feet.

"Only a dead man could abide with that head," he said gravely. "For it bites, although it be dead."

Havard and Kolbiorn looked at each other, vastly startled.

"It is true what Swain says," spoke up Erik. "There is bad luck in that head—and it may be, worse."

"Worse or better, here it lies," remarked Swain. "And now I would have all the rest of the dead fetched in here, friends and enemies, and piled around Andreas."

This, too, was done.

"And now we will raise the hough," said Swain.

It was high noon, and Erik and Havard and Kolbiorn looked concernedly at his flushed face.

"Right gladly will we do what you bid us, Swain," said Kolbiorn, "but it is time that you had rest."

"I have no occasion for rest," replied Swain.

"You have a green wound," said Havard.

"So have most of you. I am no weakling to yield to a slight cut."

They argued with him as strongly as they might, but in the end he blazed into one of his cold rages, and for fear of vexing his fever they gave in to him. He stood all day in the sun, leaning upon his spear, and watched the men heaping the dirt against the walls of the skalli. He was loath to allow them to pause in their labor at night, for the dirt was still below the eaves; but the chiefs told him their people had fought and labored without stint now for several days and nights and must have rest, even if he, himself, would not.

He said nothing in reply, and went to a booth near by where he laid himself down, refusing all food, but drinking a great quantity of water. Erik, saying nothing to any other, lay at the door of this booth, and in the night Swain waked him, calling.

"What is it?" asked the little Icelander.

But indeed he knew without Swain's answer. The wounded leg was swollen as large as a man's body.

"I have pains all through me," said Swain. "It is in my mind that I have received my death-wound."

Erik hunched down on the floor beside him.

"If you will let me fetch herbs, and——"

"I am past herbs, Erik. There is a fire burning in my bowels. It is as if Olvir's spear was twisting there."

"It is a yellow tooth," muttered Erik.

Swain nodded assent, very calmly, like a man who discusses another's plight.

"That is so, little man. You had the right of it from the beginning. And so did Olvir. Men always said his grandmother Frakork laid a spell upon me, and it must be that this is it. Only a witch could bring about the end of a hale man through the bite of a dead man's head."

"There was fate in it," said Erik.

"Yes, it must be so," assented Swain. "For, as you know, I sacrificed amply to the Old Gods and the White Christ, too. It was to be—so we need not lament it."

He said nothing for a space, and Erik rose to fetch in Havard and Kolbiorn, thinking death was upon him. But Swain raised one hand in a gesture of command.

"I think my wits are leaving me, Erik. The darkness is shot with faces. See! By the door there. It is Frakork; her gray locks are powdered with charcoal from the burning. And there is Olaf, my father—and Valthiof, my brother, whom Olvir slew—and Olvir—he holds his head in one hand— But that can not be, for his head is under Andreas's feet."

"It will pass," counseled Erik. "You have nothing to fear from the dead, Swain."

"Not I," returned Swain. "I have slain and injured my enemies, and done well by my friends. But there is this I would say to you while I can master my wits, Erik. Lay me in the hough beside Andreas, and then fare for the Orkneys before the Winter gales. Bid Olaf, my son, carry forward my name. Sons, a man must have sons! And tell Jarl Harald he was right in prophesying I would go viking-faring too often. Too often, said I? No, I have accomplished what I might. I have slain my enemy. Yet I would that the gods had sent me another death than from a dead man's tooth. But what was it you said once? Or did I say it? 'What must be, will be!'

"Ho, there is Jarl Rognvald! And Jarl Paul—and Jarl Erlend! Many Jarls I have known. A few I have made. Jarl-maker, they called me, Erik. Well, a Jarl-maker comes to his doom like a common man—it may be, more foully. A dead man's tooth! Death is as strange as life!"

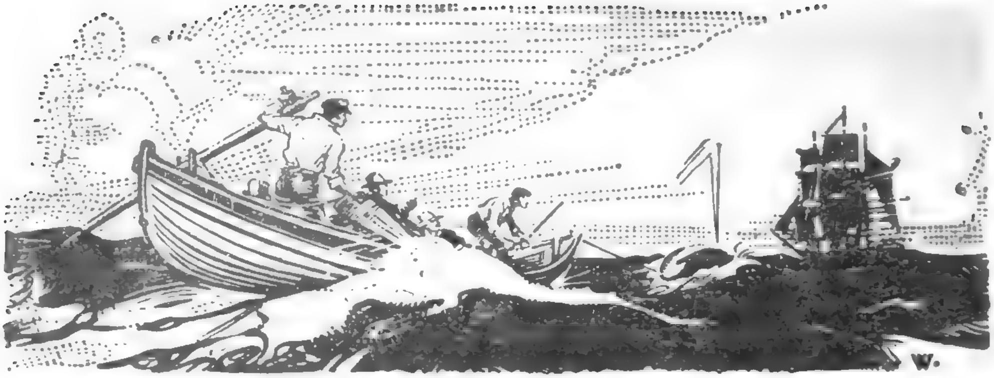
HE DIED when the dawn was in the sky. Erik closed his eyes, and went out from the hut and blew a horn. And when the Orkneyfolk had gathered Erik told them Swain was dead. For a moment there was silence, and then, very softly, a man commenced to clash his sword upon his shield. Others did so, and others, and gradually the noise increased, until the clangor echoed through the valley; and Erik and Havard and Kolbiorn picked up Swain's body and carried it forth from the booth and bore it to the skalli. They made a hole in the roof—for the doors and windows were heaped with dirt—and lowered it beside Andreas's. Then they covered the hole, and heaped on the dirt all of that day and the next. When they had finished there was a hough that rose out of the valley like a hill. There were twelve score men in that hough. The Icelandfolk afterward called it the Orkneyhough by reason of the Orkneymen who filled it and built it. It was a landmark people traveled far to see.

And this was the end of Swain Olaf's son, called Jarl-maker, who was accounted the greatest man in the North and the most famous of those who held no title.

Of Swain's son Olaf it is said that he lived to be an honor to his father's memory and a viking-farer of renown. Jarl Harald gave Olaf his own daughter, Margaret, to wife, and delighted always to favor him. Men say, likewise, that Erik Crooked Legs, as he was called, took service with Olaf Swain's son, and got his death in battle with the Scots. He was a man of much repute, and held in great respect because he had been first to see that Swain and Andreas Swain's son were fey.

"I was Swain's forecastleman," he would boast. "And I was by when he slew Olvir Rosta and had his bane from the bite of dead Olvir's head. A little thing may bring about a great man's death."

This is all of the story of Swain's End and of Olvir Rosta's.



THE MAN IN THE WATER

by James K. Waterman

Author of "The Master's Touch."

CAPTAIN ELIJAH J. MALLETT—whose name was considered by some of the crew, on certain occasions, as merely another appellation of the devil—was stamping up and down and wandering to and fro on the poop of the whaling-bark *Sankaty*, champing his heavy jaws on a dead cigar, his smoke-blue eyes seeking whom he might devour.

A four hours' chase that afternoon, after a small pod of whales, had resulted in nothing but a badly stoven boat now lying on the main hatch awaiting repairs. And Captain Mallett had just finished excoriating Mr. Deedham, his first officer, for allowing himself to get stove by a cow-whale, "A cow-whale, mind yer!"

Hearty Mr. Deedham, now on his sixth voyage with 'Lijah, as he called him in private, though failing somehow to realize the enormity of his offense, betrayed some solicitude concerning the state of the captain's liver and walked off, grinning from ear to ear, after advising a trip to the medicine-chest and a nice, big dose of salts.

While Captain Mallett's short, stumpy form was ruffling like a wet hen, the second delinquent in the person of Mr. Alex Spofford, the fourth mate, appeared on the poop making his way to the scuttle-butt for a drink of water. Glaring at him until he replaced the tin cup on the spigot, the captain then drew him out of earshot on the lee side and began——

"I was watchin' you through my glasses when you was chasin' that whale this afternoon, Mr. Spofford, an' it looked to me like you dee-liberately swung your boat right across his glip (wake)."

He frowned up into the lean, tanned face of the young officer whose steady, gray eyes were regarding him with the deference due a superior officer yet with no hint in them of trepidation.

"I cut through his glip, sir," Alex conceded, "because——"

"Wait till I'm through, Mr. Spofford, if you please," admonished the captain, pompously.

He stood for a while letting his eyes rove over the ship, taking in at a glance the foremast hands lounging about the forecastle head; the boat-steerers talking with the cooper and the carpenter at the vise-bench abaft the try-works, and the other officers grouped near the starboard main-rigging. Shifting his teeth on the cigar, he turned again to the waiting officer.

"I believe you told me when I shipped you in New Bedford that you'd never been sperm whalin' afore. Been v'yajin' up in the Ar'tic after them sluggish bowhead whales all the time, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hump! Well you've got to forget all you l'arned up there. There's as much difference between a sperm whale an' a cowardly bowhead as this here Indian Ocean you're in now is different from the Ar'tic. I don't suppose you know that the minnit yon foul the glip of a sperm whale it's just the same as sending him a telegram that you're after him. In other words you gallie him right then an' there. Did you know that?"

"Yes, sir. It's the same way with a bowhead's glip, sir."

"Oh, you knowed it, did yer!" thundered the captain, his under jaw shooting out. "You knowed it. Then what in —— did you do it for? Tell me, sir."

Two red spots, one on each cheek-bone, appeared on Alex's face, his eyes narrowed, finger-nails bit deeply into his palms; but he had been well trained in a hard school and so there was no trace of his seething anger in the unruffled tones of his reply:

"I went through the whale's glip, sir, because there was a man in the water, Joe Youngbob, hollerin' for help, an' that was the quickest way to get to him."

"A man!" ejaculated Captain Mallett, as if all this were news to him. "Well, well! An' a-hollerin' for help was he? Joe Youngbob? That would be one of them green Portygees we shipped in Fayall, I expect. Now I wonder—" he stared up at the mast-heads as if seeking information from the lookouts, whose brawny figures were etched sharply against the sky by the purpling rays of the setting sun—"I wonder what he could be hollerin' for help for, do ye s'pose."

He surveyed Alex quizzically.

The latter, feeling that the captain, for some reason, was inclined to be facetious at his expense, replied a little crisply:

"Because he didn't want to get drowned, I expect, sir. When Mr. Deedham got stove Jove was knocked overboard an' Mr. Deedham didn't cut the line till he was 'bout a quarter of a mile away. I was the nearest to Joe so I left the whale I was after an' went an' got him an' then continued the chase. My whale was gallied anyways by the noise of the mate's boat smashin', so cuttin' across his glip didn't make no difference."

"No. But stoppin' to pick up that lousy, no-count Portygee made a —— of a lot of difference!" snarled Captain Mallett, his short, thick leg stamping the deck with the force of a pile-driver. "You'd got fast to that whale if you hadn't stopped, an' you know it. That's your cussed Ar'tic trainin'. Naturally in the Ar'tic you have to pick a man up soon's you can or he'd freeze stiff, but in these here warm seas a man can stay in the water till he starves to death."

"How about sharks?" suggested Alex. "Joe yelled there was a shark after him. In fact, sir, I saw one's fin myself."

"Sharks?" The captain snapped his fingers contemptuously.

"They ain't no danger if you know how to handle 'em an' use your head. Feed your hat or a jumper to the shark an' he gets it all wound up in his teeth an' goes away plumb disgusted. No trouble at all. It's a matter of a man keepin' cool. I wouldn't think of hollerin' for help on account of a shark or two.

"Am I to understand by that, sir, I'm to pay no attention to a man in the water? If that's the custom of a sperm whaler I'll admit it's a new one on me."

"You're to understand just one thing, Mr. Spofford, an' forget all the rest. We've come out here for whales—*sperm* whales first an' all the time. Nothin' else counts. When you're headin' a boat all you're supposed to see in the water is whale. The man in the water has to take his chances of bein' picked up later on. If a man ain't capable of takin' care of hisself under any an' all circumstances he's no business in a whale-boat. Get that? What kind of a man is it, I ask you, that's so selfish as to holler for help when there's a chance for the boat to get fast to a whale. Why, I myself have floated round for hours on a bit of wreckage or the loom of an oar an' never let a peep outer me till the boats had made their kill. All you got to understand, Mr. Spofford, is whale. Go after them through —— an' high water an' if John Wing (the owner) hisself should be in the water hollerin' for help don't pay no attention till you have your whale fin out (dead). That's all, Mr. Spofford. You know my rules now. See that you follow 'em to the letter an' there won't be no friction. An' bear in mind that I don't make rules for others I wouldn't conform to myself. So if it should so happen sometime that I'm the man in the water I don't want none of my officers to stop whalin' to help me. I can look out for myself an' I expect my men to do the same. That's all Mr. Spofford."

"NANTUCKET SLEIGH-RIDE, boys!" cried Captain Mallett gleefully one morning three days later. "There's oil enough in that pod o' whales to fill the ship, medicine-chest an' all."

He scampered down the rigging from the mast-head, the glasses suspended by a strap about his neck bounding on his broad shoulders, his grizzled mustache rising and falling excitedly over the tobacco in his mouth.

"Who'll I get to steer me, sir?" asked Alex as the captain swung from the sheer-pole to the deck. "Dave, my boat-steerer, is laid up with a boil on his wrist."

"Yes, that's so," the captain reflected. "Well, I'm a-goin' to lower myself today. You can stay an' take charge of the ship-keepers an' I'll get one of the preventer-boat-steerers or you can steer me, just as you like."

"Suits me, sir. I'll do anything to get in the middle of that pod o' whales," avowed Alex, his nostrils dilating, his eyes flashing with the lust of the hunter as he looked at the spouts spraying the air two miles to windward.

"That's the spirit, Mr. Spofford!" approved the captain.

"We'll make a sperm-whaleman of you yet. Just watch me today, an' you'll likely pick up some mighty good pointers if I do say it myself."

The main-yards were backed and the four boats lowered in a twinkling, each officer craving the distinction of being the first to hurl his boat into the fray.

They had pulled about a mile when a giant sperm bull—a ninety tonner—stood on his head and, thrusting sixty feet of his length straight up into the air, began lobtailing; swaying his immense flukes back and forth, slapping the water with a concussion that could be heard for miles around.

"—— boys," the captain jubilated. "He's as long as Bunker Hill Monument! Pull, boys, pull! He's our meat, boys! He's so busy showin' off to his wives he ain't got no time for us. Oh, lay me on, boys! Pull an' lay me on! I'll set a barrel o' rum an' a tin dipper in the maple grove back of my house for you boys! Only let me touch blackskin, boys! Spring them oars—*oars*, boys! There she flirts! Oh, what a white-water, boys. Stand up, Mr. Spofford!"

Alex peaked his oar and, jumping to his feet, snatched an iron from the crotch and, bracing his left knee in the clumsy-cleat, stood waiting for the order to dart. One back-bending spurt at the oars; then came the staccato command of the captain:

"Give him ——, Spofford. Give him ——!"

With a speed that seemed scarcely human—one iron following the other so swiftly they appeared to be in the air at the same time—Alex socked two harpoons clear to the hitches in the whale just forward of his hump.

"*Starn all, starn!*" bellowed the captain, swaying back on his twenty-two-foot steering oar and sweeping the head of the boat clear of those terrible flukes.

But this bull whale was cunning. Without the customary spank of the flukes on the water he sank, almost without a ripple, straight down, like so much lead, the whale-line smoking through the bow-chock for about twenty fathoms when it stopped suddenly.

"Stand by to haul line!" yelled the captain, catching a turn around the loggerhead. "Come aft and take her, Mr. Spofford, an' I'll show you a few Indian Ocean tricks. Just watch me."

Alex did not, however, have time to watch anything just then, for the whale, coming up with a rush underneath the bow of the boat and nearly standing it on end, sent Alex sprawling onto the bow-oarsman. Captain Mallett was shot over the stern taking with him the stroke-oar which he clutched madly on his way. The boat righting the next instant and the whale starting to run, the craft was whisked out of the captain's reach just as he was about to grasp the gunwale.

Alex scrambled to his feet and saw that John Fogo, the stroke-oarsman, with great presence of mind, had taken another turn of the line around the loggerhead and was holding on grimly, while the whale spurted ahead, throwing his great junk ten feet out of water at every spout.

"That's right, Joe!" Alex approved. "Don't slack an inch. We got to get this whale or keep right on a-goin'. There'll be —— to pay if we don't make a kill. The cap'n will skin us."

Alex threw a glance over his shoulder as he picked up a lance and saw the captain in the act of mounting the oar, his moon-like face convulsed with rage. The officer's lean cheek wrinkled into a grin.

"He sure showed me a trick all right," he chuckled. "A little taste of his own medicine won't hurt none, howsomever.

I'll tend to him when we get this whale turned up."

AFTER Captain Mallett had voiced his opinion to high heaven of this particular sperm bull, he raised himself on his frail support and surveyed the situation with a practised eye. The three other boats, now about two miles distant, had also got fast and seemed in no difficulty. The ship, three miles to leeward, had refused to tack in the faint breeze and the ship-keepers were now bracing forward again. Under these circumstances Captain Mallett knew that he was due to remain some little while in the water, and so he filled his mouth with well-soaked tobacco and settled himself as comfortably as possible to watch the maneuvers of his fourth mate.

The bull, after running about a quarter of a mile, slackened speed and milled round at right angles to the bow of the boat, slackening the line and giving the crew a chance to haul up on him. At that moment a plump young cow, sensing something wrong with her huge consort, came nosing up to investigate, but catching sight of the boat attempted to sheer off.

She was too late, however, for Alex without a second's hesitation and regardless of the fact that the stern of the boat was not four feet from her flukes, darted his lance into her "life." The cow gave a convulsive heave and threw herself half out of water, without damage to the boat; her next spout was tinged with red and the next was a thick column of turbid blood. She at once went into her flurry and turned fin out—killed by a single lance thrust inside of eight minutes.

Captain Mallett gasped in admiration:

"By the 'tarnal, I'll take back what I ever said about bowheaders. That Spofford handles his lance as pretty as I ever see. He could lance a sardine, I do believe. I see now why John Wing give him such a thunderin' big lay for a fourth mate. Don't think I can larn him much, but——"

He stopped short and glanced at the blade of his oar, which had jarred suddenly, and found himself being surveyed speculatively by the cold, cruel eye of a shark—a shark as long as the *Sankaty's* top gallant yard and with a head nearly as large as a blubber-tub.

Long familiarity with these tigers of the deep had inbred in the captain a certain contempt for them. To be sure he had never been absolutely alone in the water with one before but he felt, as he had often averred, there was not much danger from a lone shark if a man only kept cool. And so Captain Mallett, far from being frightened, felt only a sense of annoyance at having his serenity disturbed in this manner, just as he was about to witness an exciting combat between his fourth mate and a hundred-and-fifty-barrel bull.

"Get outer here, you sarpint!" he snarled, and, treading water, whaled away with the oar.

The shark gave a sinuous flicker of its body and appeared a few yards away on the captain's right hand. Whereupon the doughty skipper assayed the feat of ramming the blade of the oar down the shark's throat as it turned on its side and shot toward him, exposing a mouth the width of a deck-bucket, armed with row inside of row of glistening teeth as sharp and jagged as a cross-cut saw.

The end of the oar missed this cavern and went sliding along the shark's smooth belly. The momentum carried the captain with it and he heard distinctly the snapping clash of the monster's teeth as it flashed by, its tail brushing the captain and imparting a sensation as if he had suddenly come in contact with a live wire. It was at this moment that the cold fingers of fear began squeezing his heart.

Pantingly he faced about just in time to meet another wicked rush. The captain had not time to use the oar, but managed to avoid those mangling jaws by thrusting himself sidewise. The shark shot on for a few feet and, turning slowly, lay motionless, apparently studying this tempting provender which somehow seemed always to escape him. Captain Mallett, his eyes strained on the shark, reversed the oar, with the loom out, in order to handle it easier. The necessity of constantly treading water with no opportunity for a rest was fast wearing the skipper out. His heart became leaden with despair.

Of a sudden he heard, close at hand, the *wh-oosh* of a whale's spout, followed by the enraged snapping of its spouthole. Looking out of the clew of his eye he saw the boat not twenty feet away, hauled up forward of the whale's hump, and Mr. Spofford energetically churning the giant bull with his lance.

Captain Mallett dared not make a dash

for the boat for he knew that the shark would have him the moment he turned to make the attempt. And it seemed to the captain the most monstrous exhibition of indifference he had ever witnessed, this officer coolly making his kill while he himself was momentarily in danger of being engulfed in the maws of this sea-scavenger.

"For ——'s sake, Mr. Spofford!" he bawled. "Cut yer line an' come here quick, *quick!* Don't you see this —— is set on makin' a meal o' me?"

He had no time to say more, for the shark began to draw near circumspectly, as if choosing a place on the captain's rotund body on which to fasten. A second later came the rush so swift and sudden that the captain had no time to use the oar and, maddened with fear, he let it go and beat the sea furiously with his fists; the horrible effluvium flowing from some substance ejected by the shark striking his nostrils and rendering him suddenly weak and sick.

Then a lance-warp dropped lightly as thistle-down across the captain's shoulders. A thud came to his ears, followed by the great shark lashing the sea to foam. And to the captain's astonishment and great joy he perceived that his enemy was pierced through the middle by a whale-lance, the pole of which was slapping the water as the shark in his agony rolled from side to side, snapping at the bright steel protruding from his vitals.

"Just a minnit, cap'n!" came the cool, steady voice of his fourth officer. "We're comin'."

Alex, observing thick blood sobbing from the whale's spout-hole, and knowing it was about to go into its flurry, promptly cut the the line. Giving the order to "out oars" he pulled down and dragged the captain into the boat, where he slumped down in the stern sheets, his mouth working noiselessly like the gills of a fish.

"——!" he exploded when he could find his voice.

"That blasted shark near got me. That was the prettiest lance-throw that ever was, Mr. Spofford. I never see the like. Don't appear to me I can larn you much about whalin' procedyoor, an' I believe that's a first-rate idee of yourn to always look after the man in the water first of all. Pull round, boys, an' we'll finish that shark with the boat-spade. I wanter keep that lance for a souv'neer."

ODD WAYS OF THE GRIZZLY

by Austin Hall

MONARCH of all he surveys, afraid of nothing on earth, and the most lovable creature of the whole animal kingdom—that is the grizzly bear. Sounds like a paradox, doesn't it? But it is true, every word. And on top of it the poor fellow has been compelled to go up against man with the terrible appellation of *Ursus Horribilis*. All of which we owe to the expedition of Lewis and Clark and the description that was brought back of the terrible bear that came straight into camp and even swam the river to reach the boats—no one ever dreamed that the poor fellow was merely inquisitive and playful—a bear so great that he could kill an ox with a single blow of his paw. Of course he was a man-eater, bloodthirsty, and to be killed without mercy. The settlers who migrated West accepted the dictum—was it not backed up with the Latin *horribilis*—and set out for his extermination. But the great fellow was no coward and as soon as he learned that man was his enemy, he made ready for fight on the slightest occasion. And then one man in California, a lover of animals, set out to find the real nature of the grizzly. That man was John Capen Adams.

Adams set out without a gun, went to the lairs and found out that not a bear among them would molest him. The bear was inquisitive, that was all; and Adams proved that he was not an eater of human flesh. He caught them and he tamed them and for years he and his bears were the wonder of the country. After Adams, others took up the study of the grizzly, corroborated what he had claimed and established the fact that under no circumstance would the grizzly touch human flesh—not even when starving.

THE LONG KNIVES

A Five Part Story Part III

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Old Misery," "Red Autumn," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

IN JUNE of 1793 I was returning from Canada, where in the rôle of a deserter from the American Army I had learned much of value to General "Mad Anthony" Wayne concerning British dealings with the Indians. Reaching Virginia, I crossed to the forks of the Ohio by way of the "Bloody Road." As I strode along the forest path, checkered by light and shade from the overhanging forest trees, I recollected the tragic history of that trail. There the red death had skulked upon the footsteps of settlers, and there the armies of Burgoyne and St. Clair had been annihilated by arrow and tomahawk. I prayed that Wayne's army—the army of the "Long Knives," as the Americans were called by the Indians—would not meet a similar fate in the coming campaign.

At this time Mad Anthony Wayne was at Cincinnati. To join him I stopped at Pittsburg and took the boat down the Ohio. On the boat with me were a number of Yankee immigrants, among them an odd combination of innocence, genius and bravery named Hate-Evil Durgin. His peculiarities repelled his fellow-travelers and attracted me; we drifted into acquaintance. I told him my name—Peter Watson; my business—spy for Mad Anthony; and my mission—to rejoin the Army and to learn something on the way of a white renegade named Quain, one of a group of whites, including the Girtys and Black Dorman, who were red men at heart.

"Hate" Durgin refused to be cowed by the prospect of meeting these men.

"I won't turn tail to anything short of the——," he said. "And that ain't bragging neither. The Durgins don't brag."

I looked at him calculatingly. He might be scatter-brained and a dreamer, I decided, but he was too stubborn of soul to give ground before anything that walked on legs.

So at Marietta, Ohio, when I left the boat and continued my way by canoe, I was not displeased that Durgin should have decided to leave the immigrants and to throw in his lot with me. He seemed to think that in the Army he might have leisure to work out some of the inventions he had in mind. We paddled down the river together.

Some thirteen miles down, Durgin was exhausted and insisted on landing. I complied, for I needed sleep. We climbed the hill by an ancient path which led us at length to a solitary cabin. The occupant proved to be a powerful man with a white beard, at first suspicious but finally willing to let us stay for the night.

As we talked together before the roaring fire, which he strangely insisted on keeping up despite the Summer weather, I asked him Quain's whereabouts.

"I may have heard the name, but I don't remember it," he pondered.

And then in answer to our questions he said that the huge fire was for his rheumatism's sake. When he stepped into the back room, however, I thrust a poker into the embers and raked out four buttons and some fragments of smoldering cloth. Our host had been burning garments. Then we heard men coming up the path.

"We must clear out," I whispered.

"Through the back room," Durgin agreed. "That feller must 'a' left the house that way."

As we lifted the buffalo-robe curtain and went in we discovered that a man had been murdered. His naked body lay in the bunk, and the bloody knife was stuck in the wall.

In horror we ran out toward the river. We heard the bearded man behind us calling to the other men. They hailed him by name. He was Quain!

Durgin halted pursuit for an instant by hurling an ax at the leader, but soon they were after us. We gained our canoe barely in time and flashed down the river ahead of them.

Some miles down we found an ally in Old Podge, a veteran hunter of the region, who forced us at the muzzle of his rifle to take him on board. At first I did not welcome him, but later when he had helped Durgin and me to repulse Quain's party I realized that he was of great assistance to us, although he was obsessed with the idea that White Tom, a Delaware whose son he had killed, was on his trail.

"The Long Knives," copyright, 1923, by Hugh Pendexter.

Quain bothered us no more on the journey. I hoped that one of our bullets had put him out of the world. Still farther down the river the Night Walker, the leader of Wayne's Chickasaw scouts, joined us.

With little more trouble we came to Cincinnati.

There Durgin, after a fight with Ogden, a sergeant who made sport of his Yankee peculiarities, joined Wayne's army. As a result of the fight General Wayne gave orders that no more men be allowed outside of camp without passes.

I reported to the general and told him what I had learned of British and Indian plans. Wayne agreed with me that Alexander McKee, the British Indian agent, was the stimulator of all the trouble between Indians and whites. When my report was over General Wayne thanked me. Then he drummed his fingers softly on the table and asked—

"You would volunteer to go back if it were considered a military necessity?"

I thought of the dangers I had just been through. I shrank from the nervous strain of another Winter among the English and remembered the ignominious fate of a spy. But I answered—

"I am ready at any time, sir."

My heart was heavy as I passed from the hut and walked to the outskirts of the camp to be alone while I thought it over.

I HAD not been long in camp before one Hodgecomb, a recent recruit, was branded for desertion. He was about to be drummed out of camp when I recognized him as Quain. He was thereupon held for hanging as a spy. Quain escaped, however, and fled to the north. I suspected that Ogden, who was his guard that night, could have told how the escape had been effected.

I expected to be detailed to hunt for him; but instead General Posey, the post commander, asked me to go on a quite different mission.

"Can you win north to Detroit over the Bloody Way, Watson?" he inquired.

The dreaded request, foreshadowed by General Wayne's question, had been made; again I must venture into the heart of hostile Indian and British territory as a spy.

"Our commissioners are treating with the Indians there," Posey went on. "If they can not arrange a peace, if war is to come, we must know at once. The War Department has arranged for messengers, but General Wayne will feel more secure if in addition to them he has one of his own scouts fetching the word. You are not detailed for this work, you understand."

"I volunteer," I told him.

And so it was arranged.

As an incidental mission I planned the death of a hostile Indian who had been lurking about camp, murdering our soldiers. It was necessary to "get" him, for he was disguised with the yellow ribbon which was the insignia of our own Chickasaw and Choctaw scouts, with the natural result that the soldiers suspected treachery on the part of their allies. The Night Walker as leader of the Chickasaws accordingly announced that he would go with me to lend his aid in wiping out the suspicion which rested on his men. Durgin and Podge were my other two companions.

It was decided that I was to leave camp alone in the guise of a deserter, for such was to be my rôle when I finally came to the Shawnee country and to Detroit. A short distance out I met the Night Walker, who painted and dressed me in the Indian fashion.

Then we separated to search for the hostile. It was my luck to come upon him and kill him by a stratagem, much to the Night Walker's disappointment. The latter took the dead man's head back to camp to prove that it was a Miami, not a Chickasaw, who had committed the murders, and returned with Podge. Like myself Podge was stripped and painted Indian fashion; but his purpose in assuming the disguise was to delude White Tom, the Delaware, who he thought was still on his trail. Podge said that Durgin had quarreled with him and was gone off by himself. That bit of information worried me, for Durgin was no woodsman.

We three traveled on toward the north and Detroit. At the Auglaize the Night Walker unexpectedly declared that a dream had warned him to go no farther.

"Two will make four," was his enigmatic statement. "If one dies the voice may send the Night Walker to make four."

Councils were being held along the Maumee River preliminary to the tribes' representative men meeting our three commissioners. To keep out of the way of runners passing between St. Mary's and the Auglaize we decided to travel by night and to save our strength by taking the water trail. So, making a raft, we propelled ourselves along the Maumee with two poles. At sunrise we hid in a pocket under the earth-covered roots of a huge tree.

From this covert some time later I heard the sound of soft, thudding moccasins along the trail above. Then, craning our necks, we saw a young white woman about to throw herself into the river. Brawny arms of copper shot from the thicket behind her and dragged her, screaming, up to the trail again.

"OH LAWD Almighty! They've took a white woman prisoner!" groaned old Podge, his lips stretching wide in a wolfish snarl and his hands closing and opening on his rifle convulsively.

I feared he was about to make a useless attempt at a rescue; and I seized his arm and whispered:

"Wait. We can do nothing now except get killed. There are many of them."

We were further astounded to hear a loud voice angrily call out:

"Let go her arms, you dirty skunk! She ain't trying to get away. Leave her alone. If my hands weren't tied I'd set my hooks into your —— ribs and soon see how your in'ards are arranged."

The band had halted, and a stern voice, speaking in Shawnee, harshly commanded—

"If the white man talks, stuff grass in his mouth."

The woman, striving to be brave, now exclaimed:

"Don't say another word, Mr. Durgin! They'll gag you if you do. I'm all right. Just fretted a bit with thinking about the children. I sha'n't run for it ag'in till I have a better chance."

The sound of a hand smacking her face stopped her talk; and we heard Hate-Evil Durgin groan—

"Oh, if I don't take some rare vengeance out the Lawd's hands if I ever get a chance!"

"They've got that poor fool as well as the woman," softly whispered Podge.

"They have him because you let him wander off alone," I hissed.

The talking ceased, and the receding steps told us that the band was hurrying on. Durgin's capture affected me tremendously, although the fact that he was being carried north to the villages led me to hope he would not be painted black. I did not fear much for the woman's safety. Once she reached the Maumee towns she could induce a British or French trader to buy her and take her to Canada, where she could serve her new master until a way could be found for her to return to her home.

As pursuit in the daytime was useless Old Podge finished his sleep. Dead tired, I was unconscious almost as soon as I lay down. It did not seem as if I had more than closed my eyes before Podge was arousing me, saying that I had had my four hours and that it was time to eat more of the corn and meat. I noticed he had killed time by further smoothing the two poles. I criticized his efforts, for the removal of the bark left the white wood very conspicuous. He listened with a peevish expression on his wrinkled face and replied:

"Seems I can't suit nohow. We'd better split our trail and each go his own path."

I stared at the whittlings along the edge of the stream and grumbled—

"If you let any shavings fall into the water the chances are our path is already finished."

"Pooh! You see trouble in everything. Can't even trim a couple of poles without you yawping about it. Now, see here, Mr. Watson; I'm an old man. I don't like for younkers to raise their dander and talk crumptous about what I do. I forgit more about woods and Injuns then you'll ever know——"

I was thrown violently forward on my face, my head in the shallow water, and had my hands twisted behind my back before I could realize what had happened. I could not breathe and had sense enough to remain quiet. As I was believing I was fated to drown without wetting my ears I was dragged back and permitted to fill my lungs. For a few moments I was busy winking the water from my eyes. When able to see I beheld Old Podge lying where he had been felled by the flat of an ax. Several savages were around the hiding-place, and one whom I took to be the leader was boasting in Shawnee:

"The war-medicine of Spotted Snake is very strong. It brought him a talk in his sleep, saying a white man and a white woman would be taken prisoners. It brought him another talk, saying two more white men would be caught."

He was a magnificently formed fellow, a worthy descendant of those intrepid men who had built their villages from the head of the Potomac to the Maumee and whose uneasy fate kept them ever on the move and at odds with white or red foes. A pox-faced man spoke up and reminded him—

"It was Big Bear who saw the pieces of bark and wood floating on the water."

"Big Bear found what Spotted Snake's war-medicine told him to find," sternly declared the first speaker.

"Oh, Lawd! I've tipped over the kettle!" groaned Old Podge, writhing about and lifting his tightly tied hands to his poor head.

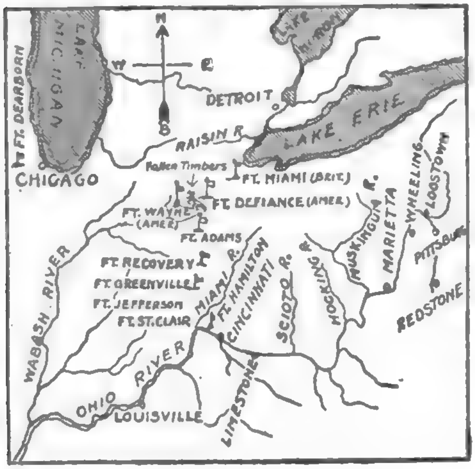
Our captors permitted him to work himself into a sitting position, and when he saw I was alive he cried:

"Halleluiah! White Tom ain't got me, and you're still kicking. We've got a fight left in us yet."

He was roughly yanked to his feet. I rose of my own accord and told the leader in his own tongue:

"The Bloody Road is ankle-deep with blood that the brave Shawnees have made flow from white people. But why are the men who run away from the whites and come to find a mat and a hut among the Shawnees made prisoners? We ran away from the Long Knives down on the Ohio. We travel fast to find the Shawnees. Look at us!"

Spotted Snake eyed me malignantly. He had announced that his war-medicine had delivered us into his hands. To accept us as refugees from the Army would be to belittle his medicine. And because of their years of wandering and coming into contact with various red nations there were no people who had gathered more myths, legends and ceremonies than had the Shawnees, nor who were given more to dreams and visions. The Southern tribes held them to be magicians, and from each tribe they had borrowed some superstition. To say they were devoted to their medicine is phrasing it mildly. Men who were responsible for widely scattering the Cherokee belief in Uktena, the horned serpent, would follow most carefully the dictates of a dream.



Big Bear, plainly jealous of the leader, ventured to suggest:

"There are other white men in the woods who are not stripped and painted. Spotted Snake's medicine told about them in his dream."

But the man of the Snake clan would have none of this; and he haughtily commanded his band:

"Bring them up into the path where the man and the woman are tied. The war-medicine said four should be prisoners, but only two should be taken to the village. The Snake believes these men will be painted black."

"—— him! He plans to roast us!" gasped Old Podge. "And all the time I've been watching out for a Delaware to do that trick!"

We were hauled up the bank and into the trail. With our hands secured behind us and guarded against all possibility of escape, we were hustled along. I counted seven men and knew the main body must be close by. Our captors, with the exception of Big Bear, who was actuated by jealousy only, rejoiced at the prospect of a burning. We were forced to proceed at a rapid trot, and at the least sign of slowing our pace we were prodded in the back with the muzzles of our own rifles.

In this fashion, savagely goaded and at times tripping and falling on our faces, we covered a mile or more and were brought to halt in a small clearing on the river-bank. There, tied to trees, were Durgin and the white woman.

"Oh, Lawd! We're four! The Chickasaw had the right of it. Two's become four. That means I'm dished," cried Old Podge.

"Stop it!" I warned. "No weakness!"

Durgin had not recognized us. He was busy entertaining his guards by looping a piece of vine through a buttonhole of his coat and jerking it free without tearing the cloth or breaking the vine. He was secured to a tree by a thong around his waist and another around his neck, both being made fast to a bough above. As long as he worked his tricks his hands would not be tied. The woman was secured in a similar manner, her hands being free. The two of them stared at us. The disheveled appearance of the woman kept me from recognizing her until Old Podge muttered:

"By cracky! She's the same one we helped across the Ohio! What in sin is she doing on the Injun Shore?"

Then, addressing her, he said:

"Ma'am, the last time we see you and tambly you was all bound for the Big Sandy and saying you was going back to Virginny. And here you be!"

She pawed her hair from her eyes and stared at us wildly.

"White men painted like Injuns!" she muttered. "Or Injuns that talk like white men!"

"—— spouting if it ain't my friends!" cried Durgin.

"No names, Durgin!" I warned him.

The woman excitedly continued:

"Be you the folks who set us across the river? It's turrible sad to see you here. Have you turned Injun?"

"Ma'am, we're prisoners same's you be," Old Podge assured her.

"God pity us!" gasped Durgin, his nimble fingers fumbling awkwardly with the vine for a moment.

The woman, loquacious despite her fears, explained:

"I made my man find a canoe and go back to git the cow. Left the children with some hunters from Bryan's Station. Fool's me! I was bound to fetch the critter across on a raft. The Injuns come running through the clearing. I just had time to yell for my man to leg it 'fore the varmints grabbed me. It's Heaven's justice it was me that was caught. I would go back after the critter! And thank the good Lawd neither of you is my man."

"None of them is carrying scalps, so he must have escaped," I told her. "I believe you'll be safe too."

"It's God's goodness that neither of you is him," she repeated.

Hate-Evil Durgin threw what appeared to be a loop of vine around a savage's head and pulled it free with a jerk as if it had severed head from neck; then he lost his nerve for a moment and wailed:

"Old Podge and Mr. Watson! Misery of life! But what a meeting!"

"That's right!" I rejoined sarcastically. "Keep on calling us by name, and it'll be only a matter of time before some white man hears and learns who our friend is."

And I nodded toward Podge.

"Learning that, he'll know we're not what we pretend to be," I added.

Spotted Snake did not approve of so much talking and gestured with his ax for Durgin to be silent. Yet he eyed the New Englander with a certain amount of respect because of what he believed to be his magic. Durgin held up a piece of vine, an end clutched in each hand, and by passing one hand over the other so rapidly as almost to defy the eye tied a knot. As sleight of hand it was the best I had seen. The Snake fell back a few steps and stared fixedly at the knot.

"The white man's medicine is very strong. It will eat up a weak medicine," Big Bear maliciously remarked.

Spotted Snake spoke to his young men, who secured some charred sticks from the fire and began rubbing the burned ends over our faces and breasts.

Durgin watched them curiously and inquired—

"Going to take you into the tribe?"

"They're painting 'em black!" screamed the woman. "Oh, heavenly Father! Don't you see? They're going to burn 'em!"

And she clapped a hand to her mouth and bowed her head so as not to witness the terrible spectacle.

Durgin slowly twisted his head and stared at her, then at us. In a scarcely audible voice he exclaimed:

"That's very bad—very—bad! I don't think I can bear to watch that. Can't you do something, Watson?"

"Turn your heads. Don't watch," I warned him and the woman. "We shall try to go through it the best we can."

Old Podge suddenly discovered that his lips were very dry. He kept moistening them and started to speak several times before he was able to say:

"All the time I've been skeered of White Tom! Never dreamed of Shawnee fire. What tricks! What tricks!"

THEY were still painting us black, and the woman with tightly closed eyes was praying, when two Indians entered the clearing, coming from the north. The Night Walker's strange words came to me—

"If one dies the voice may send the Night Walker to make four."

Despite the imminence of danger the thought occurred to me that the Chickasaw's medicine was faulty. It had at the most forecasted the death of one; here were two waiting for the live coals and the blazing fagots.

From the woods, coming from the north as had the two savages, walked a white man. He was a little under six feet in height and heavy of build. Both hair and eyes were black; his gaze was exceedingly sharp and penetrating as he stared at us prisoners. His round, full face redeemed his features from being repulsive. Despite his build he moved with the lithe agility of an Indian.

Instead of a hat he wore a silk handkerchief around his head. To the extent of moccasins and thigh leggings he might be said to be wearing the Indian costume, although many of the borderers dressed in this fashion. especially our younger men. But unlike the savages he wore no paint, finery or ornaments; and instead of a hunting-shirt he had a coat of dark blue. His belt supported a silver-mounted pistol, a short, broad dirk and an ax. He was carrying a long rifle.

I supposed Old Podge was overcome by

the prospect of being rescued by the white men, for he began breathing in a labored manner. I know the man's appearance on the grim scene filled me with sudden hope until he halted and wiped the moisture from his forehead, and in doing so pushed back the handkerchief and revealed a deep scar. He scowled heavily as he saw my gaze fastened on the livid mark.

"I sent the Yankee to —— who give me that," he announced in a strident voice. "He was one white man the Injuns didn't kill when St. Clair was whipped back to the Ohio."

He lied. I had never met him, but I knew the history of the scar as many on the frontier knew it. After Captain Brant (Thayendanegea) and George Girty ambushed and killed or captured one hundred men of Colonel Lochry's command below the mouth of the Great Miami a dozen years before, Brant had boasted over his success. Simon Girty, probably jealous that he had not been present at the killing in place of his brother George, had called the great Mohawk a liar. Brant struck him with a sword or ax; by the resulting scar on the forehead it was possible thereafter for all men on the border to know the renegade.

"Sent him to ——! The —— Yankee!" he repeated, staring at us as if waiting for us to challenge his statement.

Then he shook hands with Spotted Snake and casually remarked—

"You paint two men black?"

"My medicine brought a talk to me. It is good to paint them black," said the Snake.

"Before they burn I will talk with them," said Girty.

He halted before Podge, wrinkled his brows and said:

"You make me think of somebody. What's your name?"

"Simpson," muttered my friend.

And I suspected that he was forgetting the fate promised by Spotted Snake in his new fear of being recognized by Girty as an old acquaintance at Chambers' Mills. Fearing Podge might be recognized if he talked further, I spoke up and said:

"You are Simon Girty. We are mighty glad you've come. Can't you buy us from the Shawnees? We're deserters from Wayne's army. We were trying to make the Maumee villages when we were captured. We'd stripped and painted and had shaved our heads, believing the Shawnees would receive us as friends. If we'd known we were to be burned we would have stayed with the army."

"How did you know I was Simon Girty?" he demanded.

"Because you're free to come and go among the Indians as you will. No other white man can do that."

I did not mention the scar, fearing it would be unwise.

"That's a lie," he quietly told me. "Lots of white men come and go. Injuns don't care who the white man is if they know he's their friend."

He turned to Spotted Snake and inquired as to the circumstances of our capture, and if we were stripped, shaved and painted as I had claimed. Receiving an affirmative answer, he dropped to the ground, seated himself cross-legged before me and then asked the question he always put to any white man from the Ohio he happened to meet. It was—

"What'll they do with me if they catch me?"

"I don't know," I truthfully replied.

"I've heard a heap of talk about being burned."

And his voice took on an edge I did not relish.

"What some of the Kentucky border men might do and what the United States authorities would do are two different matters," I said. "There's been lots of talk, and some folks give you credit every time a white man runs with a war-party. But neither the United States Government nor its representatives burn people. I suppose you would be locked up until this trouble with the Indians is settled."

"—— 'em! They marked me as a traitor. When I quit Pittsburg I was free to do as any other man. McKee broke his parole when he run away. I didn't. Do they talk about burning him?"

"It's said General Wayne blames him more than any one else for the trouble north of the Ohio."

This was the truth.

I had not answered his question, but he seemed satisfied and swung back to his original query.

"Don't think they'd burn or hang me?" he asked.

I could never love the truth enough to

refuse a chance to save my life by telling a lie; and I emphatically said—

"Only hot-heads talk that way."

Then I took my turn and asked:

"What about getting us out of this? I'd be shot or hung if Wayne's men caught me. And it does seem mighty hard to be burned by the very people I came up here to join."

He drew his knife, shaved a twig to a fine point and thoughtfully picked his teeth, glancing frequently at Old Podge. It was Podge's resemblance to some one he had known—and not my predicament—that was occupying the renegade's thoughts. I realized this more fully when he exclaimed:

"Queer I can't remember where and when I've seen some one that looks like this scrawny cuss! I'd swear it was about to hop into my mind; then I'm far away as ever."

"If they'd tied you up and painted you black when you came up here with McKee and Elliott you would have thought it was pretty harsh treatment."

"Proba'ly would have rasped me considerable," he admitted. "Well, I'll have a talk with Spotted Tail. He's a friend of mine. I'll do what I can for you. Don't be s'prized if I seem to act offish. Sometimes that's the best way to act before an Injun. But if he's set on burning you because his medicine tells him to, there ain't nothing I can do to change him."

"I'm asking you to do what you can for my friend—Simpson," I reminded him. "He deserted with me. He hasn't any more use for Wayne's army and Americans than I have."

Girty tossed aside his toothpick and idly stabbed his knife into the ground several times while he sent his piercing gaze back to Old Podge's wrinkled, painted, wobegone countenance.

"—— if I can see he's worth saving," he mused. "Then again, I can't tell if he makes me think of some one I was friendly to or was set against. Seems to have about reached the end of his trail, whether he's burned or left to die natural."

"If you can't speak for both of us, Girty, I'll have to go through with the roasting. I could never hold up my head if I escaped death and he burned. I was the one that got him to quit the army."

"I've told you I'd see what I could do," he harshly retorted. "I'll have a talk with the Snake. One of my runners fetched word he had a white woman, and I 'lowed I'd buy her to wait on my wife or give her to Jim's Betsy as a servant. Rather think my woman wouldn't care for her. She don't look to be much. But the Snake won't hurt her. She's safe anyway. Who's t'other feller?"

"Deserter like myself—Durgin by name. Couldn't stand Army life."

"Why didn't you say that in the first place? Ain't heard you hooting to save his hide from a scorching."

"I think as much of him as I do of Simpson. But he doesn't seem to be in any danger. He hasn't been painted. He has a knack of doing tricks that the Indians like to see. The three of us ran away together and scattered before making Hamilton. I fell in with Simpson above Jefferson after he and Durgin had separated. We didn't know where Durgin was till we found him here."

"I'll see what I can do. Jim could do more with them, as he lives with 'em and married Betsy out of their village. Anyway I'll have a talk with the Snake."

I believed he was sincere, but there was something horribly cold-blooded and matter-of-fact in his way of promising. He showed no more feeling than if he were promising to see what he could do toward procuring for me a new pair of moccasins. And I suspected that if we did roast he would stand by and watch the proceedings without a qualm.

Had Simon Girty died instead of running away to Canada with McKee and Matthew Elliott his name would have been forgotten. For up to that time he had served Lord Dunmore as a scout, had been one of the five hundred men led by General Hand in the "Squaw Campaign"—the only time he marched under the United States flag—had enlisted men for the patriot Army, had served for a few months as second lieutenant and had successfully executed a delicate and dangerous mission to the Senecas. Now he was a hideous machine, functioning for two dollars a day—sixteen York shillings—under the orders of the British Indian Agent, Alexander McKee.

"I believe it'll be worth your time to get Simpson, Durgin and me out of this," I persisted as he started to leave me.

"No use to bite off more'n I can chaw," he answered. "The woman and the man

Durgin don't seem to be near the fire. But I wish I could remember who that old cuss makes me think of. Sometimes it seems it was some one I didn't hanker for overmuch. I'll do the best I can. The Snake may take a notion to trade but may be against taking an order on Jim. I ain't got any goods of my own. Jim may be touchy about me giving an order on him. Jim's a man of property and likes to see a profit. Yet I figger he'd pay the ransom if the Snake's willing. I'll see what I can do."

He moved on, and the young warriors resumed their task of painting us black. Girty wheeled on his heel and asked—

"What's the number of Wayne's army?"

"Simon Girty, I came 'way up here to tell you things; but if I'm going to burn I'll keep my mouth shut," I answered.

He nodded as if not blaming me for feeling that way, but casually assured me:

"Oh, you'll talk fast enough when they heap coals on your belly. You'd be quick to swap anything you know for a bullet through the head. But you take a natural view of it."

He walked aside with Spotted Snake. Old Podge took advantage of his withdrawal to whisper:

"Peter Watson, he suspects me! The minute he sees me with the paint off my face he'll be remembering Chambers' Mills and the time I booted him round when I was a man grown and he was a younker. Once he remembers that he'll send me to the fire in a hustle."

"Shut up! That was years ago. He'll never remember."

The savages finished painting us and stood at one side, impatient to tie us to the fire-posts. Other warriors already had trimmed the branches from two trees to the height of fifteen feet and had made fast to each tree a long length of rawhide. This cord would be secured to my waist and allow me to walk around the tree in a futile effort to get away from the scorching flames, and each turn would bring me closer to the tree until I could move only by reversing the process. Old Podge called it "winding a man up." It furnishes a spectacle that is very pleasing to the red spectators inasmuch as it prolongs the victim's agony.

The woman spoke up, her voice strained and choked:

"Oh, I do hope to the dear Lawd you won't have to suffer, mister! You and t'other men went out o' your way to do us a good turn. Drat that cow that made me go back to be catched! As sure as my name is Liz Pleiss I'd rather swap places with you if it wa'n't for my man and the children."

"I'm sure everything will be all right with us, Mrs. Pleiss."

Durgin had no words, but mastered his emotions by fashioning a sling from a double length of grapevine and dexterously hurling an acorn out into the river. After he had aroused the savages' admiration with half a dozen acorns he exploded:

"If they don't let you be I'm going to slip this rope off my waist and neck and hoe into them. I can get loose any time I want to. And I've still got my whittling-knife. Mebbe I can be spry enough to cut you three loose so's we all can go down fighting and cheat the fire. Never did see a man roast and never will!"

"You're safe, you fool. Keep safe," muttered Old Podge.

"Hush! Hush! That ——'s coming back," gently warned the woman.

Girty was returning, walking slowly and as unconcerned as if going to his dinner. He halted before Durgin and said:

"I saw you heave something out into the river. You 'pear to be clever. S'pose you do it again."

Durgin found another acorn and placed it in the middle of his sling, with a couple of swings around his head he shot the missile fairly across the river.

"By ——! That is mighty clever!" cried Girty, showing his first enthusiasm. "Use a stone instead of a nut and git so you can aim straight and it's as good, if not better, than a arrer. You'll be a good man for the Injuns. You can teach 'em new tricks."

It was very plain that Girty had taken a fancy to the Northerner.

"I come a-purpose with my friends there to join the Injuns and show them new fighting tricks," said Durgin. "I've got lots of idees when it comes to making newfangled kind of weapons."

"You'll be given a chance to make them. Of course slings ain't new," mused the renegade as he stared in the direction of the acorn's long flight. "Prob'ly new to most of the Injuns, though."

Slings were not a part of the red man's equipment. They were sometimes used perhaps by children of the Southern tribes as playthings, although I had never seen one in the Cherokee villages I had visited. But my father had told me of seeing bullets or pellets of baked clay taken from an ancient mound, and he had assumed that they were thrown by slings. I was positive that not a man in Spotted Snake's band had ever seen a missile thrown by a sling.

Girty came to me and explained:

"Had a —— of a time. Best I could do was to put it off for a bit. As the matter now stands he'll take you to Blue Jacket's village on the Maumee and hold you for a while. If he doesn't catch two prisoners in place of you two he'll prob'ly roast you both. Wouldn't listen to trading you to me. He knows I ain't got any goods. I offered him an order on Jim, but he says if he wants to trade he'll do it first hand. However, you won't roast yet a while, and perhaps by the time we reach the mouth of the Glaize his medicine will be telling him to let you live.

"No danger to the woman or that feller with the sling. They begin to think he's a white magic worker, and they'll be keen to learn new tricks from him."

"Just what'll become of the woman?"

"Either Jim will buy her to wait on his Shawnee Betsy or I'll dicker for her to wait on my wife."

In 1784 Girty bought Catherine Malott from the Delawares after she had passed four years in captivity. He had established his home on the Canada side of the Detroit River two miles below Malden (Amherstburg). Mrs. Pleiss would not be abused with either mistress.

Spotted Snake came up and with the aid of several warriors escorted us to the river and washed off the death signs.

"My medicine will tell me when to roast the white men," he grimly informed us.

"Your medicine will never tell you to roast us," I boldly declared. "We came here to get away from the Long Knives. We are the friends of the Shawnees. We brought with us a man whose medicine is very strong."

And I nodded toward Durgin.

"His medicine will grow angry if we are sent into the fire," I warned him.

The Snake lowered but made no reply. Girty sidled up to me as I climbed to the top of the bank and demanded:

"Now open your bag of talk. What about the number of men with Wayne?"

"When we ran away he had three thousand regulars, two thousand militia and two hundred Indians. One thousand of the militia, mounted men, are quartered across the river in Kentucky."

He scowled fiercely, but not because he doubted me. I had given the usual exaggeration of Wayne's forces. He warned me:

"You be mighty careful you don't say a word of this to any of the Injuns. I see you speak Shawnee."

"I never learned their language from white men. There are Shawnee men who still call me friend and who would never dream of roasting me."

He opened his mouth to speak but changed his mind as his glance happened to rest on Old Podge, who was now being led along with a line around his neck. The old man's face was washed quite clean, not only of the black marks but of much of the paint.

"By ——! I'd give a month's pay to know who he makes me think of!" he cried.

Then of Podge he harshly asked—

"Where have you lived?"

"In the Tennessee country. Went there with James Robertson. I was in the Watauga settlements for a spell before that."

"And before that? You're no younker."

"In Carolina."

"Ever live in Pennsylvania?"

And suspicion fairly leaped from the somber eyes. Podge's wrinkled face was very stupid of expression as he wagged his head and in a singsong repeated:

"Carolina, Watauga, then the Tennessee country. Then come up into Kentucky and stayed a while. Then crossed at the mouth of the Licking and joined the Army. But I got my bellyful of Army life when they wouldn't let me go hunting."

"I'll be remembering some time," grumbled Girty, turning back.

Thus were Podge and I rescued from immediate death because of the interference of the notorious Simon Girty. Whether he acted on a whim or from a deep-seated belief that we would be of value to the Indians in the forthcoming campaign I could never determine. In 1781 he had heeded the pleading of eighteen-year-old Henry Baker, who had been captured on Wheeling Creek, and secured the youth's release from the savages. That Baker would have died a horrible death if it had not been for Girty's intercession is proved by the fate of nine other captives taken in Kentucky. They were burned, one a day. And ten years later Girty had sent Abner Hunt to the torture after a futile attempt to use him as decoy to induce the small garrison at Dunlap's Station to surrender.

How many men he sent to the stake since fleeing from Pittsburg with McKee and Elliott will never be known, for the forest gives up few secrets. Doubtless he is accused of crimes of which he was innocent, because he would need to possess the ubiquity of a god to be in the many places at one and the same time as represented by border stories. There were other renegades among the Indians; yet whenever settlement or besieged blockhouse heard a white man's voice demanding a surrender the name of Girty was whispered.

AS WE were led north Girty kept behind Durgin and talked to him much. There was no doubt in my mind that he was much taken with the New Englander. I suspect that this was the fact because Durgin was so different from us of the southern border, so different from the type of men Girty had associated with until he ran away to enter British service and receive his two dollars a day from the Crown.

Thus far we had succeeded as I had planned and hoped. It is true I had not planned on being greeted as an enemy and menaced with torture; yet we were safe until Spotted Snake's medicine became more insistent in its call for victims. Somehow I was confident that we would be given our liberty after reaching the Glaize—probably the reaction to having passed the first crisis.

Throughout the journey, which we made rapidly, Girty kept near Durgin and appeared to find pleasure in his company. When we halted to eat or take a few hours' sleep the renegade would come to me for a brief talk. He invariably touched on two topics: What would be his fate did Wayne's soldiers or the borderers catch him, and of whom did Old Podge remind him? The latter became almost as much of an obsession as the former. I even imagined that his inability to discover the cause of the resemblance was souring his disposition toward the old man. One of my great fears was that I should forget to call Podge by his assumed name of Simpson or that Durgin would forget.

Several times I had a chance to exchange a few words with Mrs. Pleiss, who was now allowed much freedom. The woman's placid attitude toward captivity, now she knew we were not to be burned, would have astounded an Easterner. She accepted her lot calmly, as something to be regretted yet endured until it could be mended. Her children were safe; her husband presumably was safe; her only cause for worry seemed to be the cow.

"If I could just know my man hung round our clearing after they catched me and that he managed to drive that critter to the shore and git her across to the Kentucky side I'd feel fair-to-middling comfortable," she told me at the last halt we made before reaching the Glaize. "But he's that finicky when Injuns are round he don't always look ahead. Never mind. Liz Pleiss will be back on the Kentucky shore 'fore the leaves begin to turn, or she ain't fit for the Injun country. And that dratted cow oughter manage to pick up a living till then."

A characteristic that strongly recommended her to her captors was her dislike for idleness. Used to hard work from sun to sun, she was lost unless her hands were busy. She had a fine way of shouldering a warrior aside and taking over the task of cooking the meat. In English she would say—

"It's the woman's place to git the meals, fair weather or foul."

She was an adept at repairing moccasins and was always ready with awl and a package of deerskin thongs, or "whangs" as we called them. And I saw her cut out and make a new pair of moccasins in a very few hours. By the time we penetrated the last of the oaks and got clear of the hazel undergrowth and came to the opening which stretches from the Maumee up the Auglaize for some distance Mrs. Pleiss' reputation for a capable squaw was very high. The Indians allowed her to go and come as she pleased and treated her with kindness.

We were at the Grand Glaize, as the ground on the high point between the Maumee and the Auglaize was known. It was here that the Northwest tribes had met in the preceding Fall. To the west, as to the south, stretched extensive areas of oak. Less than a thousand feet from the point and quite close to the high, steep bank of the Auglaize were eight stout cabins occupied by Indian traders. The largest of these, and nearest the point, was George Ironside's house. He was considered to be one of the wealthiest and most influential traders in the Maumee country. Close by him lived Pirault, a French baker, and a Scotch trader named McKenzie. The other cabins were occupied by French and English families and, to my surprize, two Americans.

"Henry Ball and his woman," explained Girty. "Captured after the St. Clair fight. They're working to earn their ransom. Woman washes and sews. The man boats on the Maumee for Mat Elliott."

Inside of a small stockade were two log houses, two or three hundred feet from the bank and fronting Ironside's place. One of these was used by McKee and Elliott for storing goods and munitions intended to keep the Indians hostile to the Americans. The other belonged to James Girty, the trader, and served Simon as headquarters when he was at the Glaize to carry out the orders of the British Indian agent. The Indians waited with us outside the stockade while he entered this cabin.

We could see a large Shawnee village, Blue Jacket's town, across the river as well as several miles of the Maumee downstream. It was a fine view and offered but little to the eye to suggest the savagery of his inhabitants. Durgin's eyes popped wide open as he gazed on the broad prairie carpeted with corn. He had seen no such crops around the white settlements on the Ohio.

People from the cabins came out to inspect us. When I heard a Scotchman address a man as "Elliott" I lost no time in asking if he were Matthew Elliott. He nodded. I asked him to intercede and have us released and explained how near Old Podge and I had been to the fire.

"You seem to be alive enough," he coldly said, and he turned and walked away without another word.

The trader Ironside, however, was very human and talked with us pleasantly. He had his comely Indian wife bring us a hot dish of dried green-corn boiled with beans. This was a most welcome repast after a diet of half-cooked meat, and we enjoyed it amazingly. McKee, the trader told us, was not at the point but was expected to arrive any day.

"He's expected," he added, "but he may not come for some time. Business at Detroit keeps him hopping back and forth between there and the rapids of the Maumee. But I heard Mat Elliott say yesterday he was expecting McKee up here soon."

"I was hoping to get work with Elliott," I said. "He does all the boating for McKee?"

"All the boating to the Maumee country for the Crown," corrected Ironside. "His schooner brings the goods and arms down to the mouth of the river, and his boatmen bring the goods up here. Water road right from this point to the fort at Detroit."

There were other questions I wished to ask but deemed it unwise to appear too curious. McKenzie, dour of face, was as cold as Elliott until Durgin began amusing a sullen-faced Indian boy of tender years. I afterward learned that the child was the son of Ironside's wife and that Simon Girty was reputed to be his father. Durgin caused the youngster's eyes to glisten by improvising a throwing-stick from a slender branch, a piece of vine and a whittled dart.

Simon-ne, as his mother called him, forgot his ill-humor, whooped and raced after the dart and soon acquired the knack of shooting it. Naturally the mother smiled on Durgin.

McKenzie was quick to become interested in the Yankee's cleverness—probably picturing the possibilities of a big trade in throwing-sticks for grown-ups—and was willing to talk to me. He soon learned my friend's bent for devising things and talked to him direct. In a broad dialect I will not attempt to produce he asked of Durgin:

"Why can't ye use your skull to fashion braw gimcracks of silver? I do a keen trade in brooches, earrings and the like, being a bit of a silversmith and making the goods myself. I'll buy you, and you can earn your ransom. You'd make a fine man for me."

I nodded for Durgin to acept the offer, but before he could make up his mind Simon-ne—enraged at having his fun interrupted—assailed the trader and kicked his legs and tried to bite him.

"—— spawn! Keep him clear of me," wrathfully cried the Scotchman.

The mother got the boy away and received several blows and kicks in so doing. Spotted Snake watched the episode with grim amusement. When the Scotchman got around to trade for Durgin the latter warned him:

"Buy me if you will, but you'll make a sorry bargain. I'll work for no man who gets his dander up because a little child doesn't act to suit him."

"What does the white man say?" asked Spotted Snake.

I told him. He stared at Durgin approvingly and declared:

"The medicine of the Snake will never say this man is to be burned. The Snake will never sell him to the trader."

Disgruntled, the Scotchman swore in his beard and left us. I inquired of Ironside:

"What will they do with us? They had me and this old man painted for the stake, but Girty saved us. What will come next?"

"I don't know. It looks favorable for you two because the Snake has changed his mind once. That shows he may change it permanently and let you live. I'd be glad to buy you all in and let you work out your ransom, but Spotted Snake won't listen to an offer. He'll take you to Blue Jacket's town. I don't think you'll come to any harm for several days. Every day gained helps your case a great deal.

"Blue Jacket is a fine man. Of course he can't come between a warrior and his prisoners, but he's busy planning to come out ahead in the powwow with the commissioners from your country, and he ought to know that white men burned in his village won't help him any. If McKee was here he'd be against it. Elliott is cold. Some say he's angry in his heart because McKee was made Indian Officer.

"Still Elliott's done well. What with his schooner and boating on the Maumee he makes a fat profit from the Crown. He takes a good profit from us traders as our goods come in and our peltry goes out in his boats. He's got a monopoly of it. Blue Jacket's a good friend of mine; I'll send a talk to him. Perhaps he can make the Snake see his medicine meant two soldiers should burn and not two men who ran away from the Army."

Spotted Snake became impatient at the delay and ordered his band to advance to the river and make the crossing. As we were going down the slope Simon Girty and another white man, who Ironside said was James Girty, emerged from the stockade and hurried to join us.

James was taller than Simon and very quick in all his movements. His neck was long, and he moved his head with snakelike grace in staring about him. This was in strong contrast to Simon's rather squat appearance. Simon's head seemed to rest on his shoulders.

The border estimate of James is doubtless correct. If the odium of uncommitted sins is fastened to his memory we may be sure that there are many crimes of his which the forest has concealed and which were known only to his Indian companions.

Unlike Simon and George Girty he was temperate in his habits. He was successful as a trader and rapidly accumulated property, far outstripping Simon, who never was a trader, in financial gains. He took to Indian life more thoroughly than Simon, but not so completely as did George.

He was a ferocious, cold-blooded scoundrel, whose sensibilities could never be touched by helplessness and weakness or by tender years and innocence. Had young Baker appealed to him for succor instead of to Simon the stake would not have been cheated of its victim. And I have no reason to doubt the frontier belief that James out-Injuned the Indians in devising new forms of torture. I know I inwardly quailed before his cold, merciless gaze.

"Where's the woman?" he harshly asked as he came up to us.

Then he saw her and stared at her intently. Turning to Spotted Snake, he began driving a bargain for her. He could trade where Simon could not—especially with the Shawnees, for he had lived with them for years and had married one of their women. The outcome of the dickering was that the Snake handed over Mrs. Pleiss to play servant to Shawnee Betsy in return for certain goods to be delivered to him at Blue Jacket's village.

"You'll have it easy," Ironside whispered to Mrs. Pleiss. "Betsy is goodhearted. She speaks English. You'll get along with her fine."

James transferred his attention to Durgin and sneered at the short, broad-skirted coat. For fully a minute he wrinkled his nose and stared at the stern features of the Northerner; then he asked—

"Where you from?"

"From Massachusetts."

"I knew it!"

And the renegade spat in disgust.

"You're one of those —— Yankees!"

"You're neither Yankee nor Buckskin. You're a —— scoundrel!" hotly replied Durgin.

I had no idea the fool would let his resentment get the best of him in that fashion. I stole a glance at Simon and felt relieved to see that he was grinning in quiet amusement.

"By ——! You may keep clear of the stake, but I'll put an Injun-mark on you so's every one will know you've been up in the Injun country," howled James, drawing his knife. "I'll notch them big ears of yours so's folks will believe it when you say you met up with Jim Girty."

Simon laughed noiselessly but made no move to interfere. Spotted Snake, however, did not intend that any one should take liberties with his prisoners. And again he considered Durgin to be the most valuable man of the three of us. He had seen him doing tricks with a piece of vine. He had approved of his willingness to amuse Simonne, the Indian boy. He glided between the two men and harshly reminded them:

"A trade has been made for the white woman. Spotted Snake has not traded the white man's ears. The Shawnees will cut their own notches."

James realized he was going too far. With a loud laugh, as if he had been joking, he replaced the knife in his belt and told the Snake—

"I wanted to see if he is a brave man."

"He talked like a brave man," quietly said the Snake, who had caught the gist of Durgin's defiance. "A strong medicine talks to him."

"I will double the price I paid for the woman," said James hungrily.

"Spotted Snake will not trade any more today."

And with that the Shawnee fell in beside Durgin and led the way to the river-bank. Simon accompanied us. James kept in the background. While we waited for the canoes to be brought up Simon remembered what had been troubling him and called out to his brother:

"Jim, I wish you'd just look here a minute. Take a peek at this old cuss. Who's he make you think of? Any one?"

James glided forward, thrust his hand roughly under Old Podge's chin, jerked up his head and stared at the wrinkled countenance. The old man returned the gaze bravely. I saw a puzzled expression creep into James' eyes. Dropping his hand, he said:

"By ——! I'd never noticed it, but he does look like some one I've known."

"Then it's some one we've both known," said Simon. "And I can't git over the notion it was some one somewhere we didn't hanker for very much."

"Better cut his harslet out, Simon. Never let a man slip away from your knife if he looks like any one you hate."

Simon shook his head and replied:

"He belongs to the Snake. I don't even know who he looks like. But there's plenty of time. Some day I'll remember. It may come to me any second. The Snake's gitting impatient."

Mrs. Pleiss, up the slope, waved her hand to me and yelled:

"Good-by, mister. If you git clear of them varmints just pass word up 'n' down the river so's my man and children will know I'm all right. Tell him to be looking for me 'fore snow comes. Tell him if he can't git the cow 'cross the river he'd better butcher the critter and save the beef."

CHAPTER VI

THE UNOPENED BAG OF TALK

PODGE and I were quite familiar with the country around the confluence of the Auglaize and Maumee, but to Durgin it was a revelation. From the stump-dotted clearings of the white man's frontier, where truck patches were insignificant and the gashes and wreckage left by pioneer fire and ax marred the natural beauty of the new country, we had come to a cultivated area of huge extent.

The sight was one to delight the heart of a husbandman and presented nothing to offend in the way of "deadenings," or burned strips. On the Auglaize and along the Maumee the cornfields stretched away for mile after mile, while all kinds of other vegetables seemed to be growing in the greatest abundance. Surrounding Blue Jacket's town there must have been nearly a thousand acres planted to corn. It was the magnificent granary of the Northwest tribes. Could this sea of corn be destroyed the Indian power would be crippled for a year. Each tribe would be compelled to separate in small bands and hunt most energetically to stave off starvation.

Durgin exclaimed:

"It's more like Eastern farms then the Ohio country is! But the fields are bigger'n we have in the North. Land of Goshen! What a soil it must be!"

"Two was made four and now is three. Wonder if the Chickasaw's medicine is talking to him," muttered Podge.

After landing we were led direct to the Shawnee village. Before arriving among the huts Girty fell back to talk with me and again question me about Wayne's forces. I gave him the same answer I had made on the Auglaize and in turn inquired about the strength of the Indians. He promptly told me at least three thousand would be in the field before Wayne could march fifty miles from Fort Washington. Of this number there were a thousand coming from the Ottawa and Detroit Wyandot towns to join the Miamis, Shawnees, Delawares and Sandusky Wyandots.

"And I ain't counting them that'll come from the Piankashaw, Kickapoo and Potawatomi tribes," he added for good measure. "And of course there'll be the British regulars and the Canadian militia."

"That'll mean war with England—between the United States and England," I remarked.

"I'll raise —— throughout the Ohio country to bring that about," he grimly declared. "But so far's Wayne's army is concerned it'll be smothered in the forest, and the United States can't prove, and won't try very hard to prove, that the redcoats give the Injuns a helping hand."

"If the British troops would only help!" I exclaimed.

"Ain't I telling you they'll help? They're helping now. You just notice how the Injuns are armed with good guns and what a plenty of powder and balls they have. We're ready this minute to give old Wayne the same sort of a drubbing we give St. Clair when I got this sword-cut on my head and sent the —— Yankee who give it to ——!"

I never changed a muscle to betray my knowledge of how he received the wound.

"Wayne won't bring any fight to the Wabash this season," I truthfully told him.

"No chance of his marching his army up here 'stead of to the Wabash when he does come?"

"Oh, he'd never do that. He'd never get his wagon-trains through. He'll follow St. Clair's Bloody Road."

"And be hit in the head with an ax as St. Clair's army was hit! He's a —— coward. He's been fiddling round for a long time, letting on what he'd do to the northern tribes. Now let him come ahead and show his mettle."

"He won't come this year," I repeated. "Hasn't finished drilling yet. That's why I'm finished with the Army. Sick and tired of drilling, drilling. He's drilling the very heart out of his men. There's lots of them who want to quit the Army."

My talk was not altogether pleasing, for he knew the Indians and that the longer Wayne delayed the campaign the greater the chance of finding the red force scattered.

"This Fall's the time," he muttered. "The Injuns can't be held in a body very long. They'll be keen to make the Fall hunt and lay by their corn. It's mighty hard to git so many together to make a fight, and when they've come in and are primed for it you've got to feed 'em a fight or they'll be slipping away."

"You've held them well so far," I told him.

"Thanks to Alex McKee, our Injun Officer. He sees they have plenty of victuals. The vegetable truck of course helps a lot; but it would make old Wayne's eyes bung out if he could know how much beef we've fed 'em. Mat Elliott, McKee 'n' me, as well as the garrison officers in Detroit, have been hoping old Wayne would warm up and bring up a fight. What do they call him 'Mad Anthony' for? Seems hard to stir him into a fuss. St. Clair 'n' Harmar was quicker to march north then he is."

I shook my head sadly as if regretting my commander's inactivity and explained:

"Old Wayne has the notion St. Clair started too late in the season. When he comes north it'll be earlier in the season."

"—— old Wayne! He's offering a thousand dollars for my hair!" he exploded, and there was fear in his outcry; just as there was always a horrible fear in his black heart of some time falling into the clutches of his betrayed countrymen.

I spoke truthfully when I insisted:

"He never offered a thousand dollars for your hair. The men in the Army would know it if he had. And if he was to pay a thousand dollars for any scalp he'd rather have McKee's than yours."

This tickled his fancy, and he laughed heartily.

"I'll have to tell Alex that: He'll go into the air."

"But he'll blame me for saying it."

"He can blame and be ——!" chuckled Girty. "Anyway you ain't his prisoner; you belong to the Snake."

"I shouldn't be anybody's prisoner," I protested. "I and my friends should be free men. Didn't we come north to help you fight Wayne?"

He eyed me cunningly and returned:

"Wonder if you did. Or if you just come north so's not to git your jacket dusted in the big fight that's on the way. Other soldiers have come north to be quit of the Army; but we've noticed they're more keen to make Detroit and git hold of a slice of land in Canada then to stay down here and meet old Wayne."

"We'll fight if we're allowed to," I insisted.

Which was a truthful statement.

Blue Jacket's town numbered some sixty houses. Across the river was a Delaware village of eighteen houses. On entering the village Spotted Snake took us to the river side of the settlement, placed us in a stout ten-by-ten-cabin and without a word left us under guard of two warriors.

There seemed to be a large number of fighting men in the village, but that it was a permanent village and not an Army camp was shown by the many women and children. Some of the young boys came to the open door and hurled stones in at us until our guards ordered them away. A woman brought us a platter of vegetables, and as the Shawnees were famous salt-makers it did not lack for seasoning. The ration of meat which we also received had crossed the Atlantic on one of the king's ships.

Durgin appeared to be the least concerned of the three of us. I was apprehending the coming interview with Blue Jacket—for I knew he would interrogate me. Old Podge was absorbed in his dread of the Delaware village across the river. From the moment he learned that the small collection of huts belonged to men of that tribe he was convinced that White Tom must be their leader. He sat back in a corner of our hut, sighing and groaning below his breath. I tried to hush him, and he complained:

"See what your derned foolishness has fetched me to, Peter Watson. Fetched me right to the home of White Tom."

It was useless for me to remind him that the country had many Delaware villages and that his dreaded enemy could not be in more than one place at a time. He was convinced that fate had lured him to the Maumee so that White Tom's vengeance might be satiated.

After we had eaten there was a commotion among the idlers outside, and Girty thrust his head in at the doorway.

"All out here where you can be looked over," he commanded.

I WAS the first to emerge into the sunlight. A glance told me that I was facing Blue Jacket, the most noble-appearing Indian I had ever seen. He stood a good six feet and was solidly built, and yet too finely proportioned to give an impression of heaviness. I have always maintained that Catahecassa (Black Hoof) was the most graceful Indian I ever saw, but Blue Jacket in my estimation ranks next to him in physical appearance and possessed something in bearing and countenance that the other lacked. His eyes were unusually large for an Indian and very penetrating as his gaze swept over me. He had the high, broad forehead of a thinker, the aquiline nose of a captain and the wide mouth of a firm man who is not to be swayed by petty motives.

Border judgment has placed him second to Little Turtle of the Miamis and second to Buckongahelas of the Delawares. I concede that Little Turtle's ability to read the future and detect the best road for his people to follow must leave him in first place; but the white man's preference for the Delaware chief, because he was noble in spirit according to white standards and found no pleasure in wanton bloodshed, lacks consistency. Viewed from the red point of view, which always includes relentlessness, Blue Jacket walks ahead of the Delaware.

Blue Jacket's military record was one to be proud of. He was conspicuous at the defeat of Harmar and St. Clair. At the time I stood before him and felt his piercing gaze trying to bore into my brain he was said to be receiving the half-pay of a brigadier-general from the Crown.

His attire was quite splendid. His scarlet frock was richly laced with gold and caught about with a gay sash. His leggings and moccasins were red and highly ornamented. Gold epaulets adorned his powerful shoulders, and wide bracelets of silver encircled his arms. A huge gorget of silver hung from his neck, and below that was a big medallion of George the Third.

In his train was a handsome woman who, I learned later, was his wife, and with her were two pretty daughters. The latter were much fairer of complexion than the average Indian woman.

By the chief's side were his two sons, eighteen and twenty years of age. They appeared to be very intelligent and conversed easily in English with Girty. They had been educated by the British.

"These are the men, Weyapiersenwah," announced Girty, waving his hand to the three of us.

"The prisoners of Spotted Snake," jealously spoke up our captor.

"The man of the Snake clan is a very brave man. He is a cunning warrior. He has done well," slowly said Blue Jacket. "Is this the man who works magic?"

And he pointed to me. Girty placed a hand on Durgin's shoulder and said:

"This is the man, Weyapiersenwah. He draws strings through cloth without tearing the cloth. He throws acorns with a piece of grapevine as far as a warrior shoots an arrow. He says a man can kill a man far off by using a small stone in place of a nut."

The chief eyed the New Englander with much interest, but unlike the generality of Indians he did not demand an exhibition of Durgin's skill. He simply said:

"He must have a very strong medicine. Some day Spotted Snake will bring him to my lodge and tell him to show his white magic."

Girty continued:

"The three of them were captured by Spotted Snake, who also caught a white woman. He sold the woman to my brother, the trader across the river. These men say they were tired of living with the Long Knives and ran away to live with tribes on the Maumee."

"The tribes will not drive the white men south of the Ohio by using runaway men as fighters," coldly remarked the chief.

Speaking for the first time, I insisted:

"Weyapiersenwah, mighty chief of the Southerners*, I bring a small bag of talk. I find in it this: White men who run away from the Black Snake's Long Knives, and who stripped and painted and ran to find a Shawnee village, should not be treated like white men caught with guns aimed at your people."

He was silent for fully a minute; then he replied:

"Men who run away from one band of warriors do not always make fighting men for another band of warriors. They eat as much meat as warriors but do not always shoot as many guns and arrows. You are the prisoners of the Spotted Snake. It is for him to say what shall be done to you. If Weyapiersenwah had captured you he would set you free, but keep you in his village for a few sleeps. When you were strong and rested he would send one of you with a band of warriors to see how you fought against white men. Each man would be sent on a path to see if his heart were filled with blood or filled with water."

The red man's respect for property rights would not permit him to interfere between a captor and his prisoner. He could offer to buy a prisoner, but if the captor insisted on the stake, or death by any other form of torture, it was not within the province of the chief to offer opposition. There have been chiefs who acted autocratically in such matters, but always at the risk of weakening or losing their leadership.

Blue Jacket's statement of what he would do if we were his prisoners was very handsome of him, however, and possibly resulted from some talk sent to him by George Ironside. And it had its influence; for Spotted Snake sullenly replied:

"They were painted black. They live, and the black is washed away. If the Snake's medicine whispers for him to let them live they shall live and be sent on a path against the whites."

"The Spotted Snake is a great warrior. His medicine is very wise. A medicine sometimes says a white man is worth more alive than dead. Sometimes a white man is tied to a post who would have been a Simon-ne had he lived. Sometimes a medicine says, 'Burn two men,' but means two Long Knives and not men who run away from the Long Knives. That man—" and he pointed to Durgin—"is worth many blankets and ten guns if he is traded."

I glanced at Old Podge, but he was too downcast to catch the grim humor of the situation. A Northerner, unused to warfare, was more highly prized than two veteran border Indian-fighters! And all because of a silly cunning in doing tricks with strings. Spotted Snake was quick to refuse the offer, explaining:

---

*Shawnees.

"The magic-worker is worth more than the other two. The Snake's medicine never whispered for the Snake to paint him. The Snake will keep him to make a strong war-medicine. After a few sleeps the Snake's medicine will tell him what to do with the other men. He may hear a voice telling him to trade them."

"If he hears that voice and the white men are traded I will buy that man," and Girty pointed to Podge, who bowed his head to conceal a spasm of fear.

The wretched man was doubly depressed by the dread of White Tom's appearance and the fear of Girty recognizing him as an old enemy at Chambers' Mills. Had I been a vain man I might have felt sensitive to learn that the two of them were preferred before me.

"Weyapiersenwah will hope the voice will tell the Spotted Snake to keep the men from the fire," said Blue Jacket.

"The Snake's ears are open to hear the voice when it speaks."

Blue Jacket, accompanied by his wife and family, withdrew, Girty walking with the chief. Spotted Snake told me:

"The white men can stay outside the cabin but must not walk farther than its shadow. Some time they can walk very far if the medicine voice says it is good."

Old Podge, however, lost no time in retiring to a dark corner of the cabin once the Snake had left us. Durgin and I, glad to enjoy the free air, settled ourselves on the shady side of the cabin, facing the river. We watched the coming and going of runners, the arrival of prominent chiefs from the allied tribes and the preparations of a large number of Shawnees to move down the river to participate in a great council.

Durgin could not keep his hands still, and once he began experimenting with bits of strings he was surrounded by eager Indian boys. He repaired a broken bow for one youngster, and did it more quickly and more cleverly than the lad's father could have done. He took out his whittling-knife and rapidly made some arrows which were correctly balanced, the wooden heads sharpened so they would kill small game. Then he threw stones with a sling and taught one bright youth the trick of it.

After an hour of this sort of play he asked me to tell them that he would make something to surprize them if they brought him seasoned ash, but that they must keep away from the cabin while it was being made and must not ask to see it until it was finished. This pleased them much, and they quickly brought a large supply of dry ash.

We took the wood into the cabin, and the children withdrew to play games. I remained outside until near the twilight hour, hoping that the woman would come with food. When I joined my friends I found that Durgin had finished a cross-bow. The bow was short and apparently very powerful. Durgin was staring at it and appeared to be in a quandary. He complained:

"I planned this to be a toy. Then I got interested, and now I've made something that'll shoot straighter'n a bow and do deadly work. It ain't fit for any younker. I'll heave it aside and make some darts for 'em to play with."

"Put it aside, but don't destroy it," I advised him.

He had fashioned a notched wheel, and with a pin taken from a broken trigger-plate he had fastened the wheel to the side of the stock. He pulled the cord up and slipped it over the wheel. The thing at short range was as deadly as a rifle. He laid a short, heavy bolt in the shallow trough and whispered—

"I'd like most mortally to try it."

And he nodded toward the window on the river side. The Indians were gathering about their kettles; there was none on that side of the cabin to witness the experiment. A warrior trying to ride a horse recently brought in from a raid was causing uproarious amusement. Even our guards left the door to jeer at the bouncing rider.

Durgin stepped to the small opening, sighted upward and turned the wheel a notch. With a *whang* the cord of deer-sinews struck the bolt and shot it high into the heavens and over the trees to land somewhere across the river. It moved with such rapidity that my gaze could not pick up its flight until it straightened out from its upward course. Even then I could not have seen it unless I had been searching for it. The noise of the bowstring was drowned by the clamor outside.

"Too powerful for a boy to play with," said Durgin.

"Don't destroy it. Make another bolt. Hide it under your blankets," I advised him.

"Hide it, hide it!" muttered Old Podge. "Make plenty of arrers. If White Tom comes I'll give him his come-uppance with it."

Durgin thrust the gun from sight as we heard the two guards returning. One of them appeared at the doorway and gave us a perfunctory glance. The New Englander rapidly fashioned another bolt and began working on one of his curious air-sailing darts.

"I'll make the youngsters half a dozen of these," he decided.

A man from across the river, presumably from the Delaware village, halted near our door and talked with the guards. Some men across the river, he said, were discussing a new phenomenon. Something had sailed high in the heavens. One man had said it was a white pigeon, flying with the speed of a bullet, but the newcomer denied this theory. He believed it to be a manifestation of the thunder-god. He described it as a white streak, like a flash of lightning without light or noise. The guards were deeply interested. One of them asked if it looked like a white snake.

Spotted Snake came along and was informed of the occurrence. He promptly declared it was his medicine flying over the village.

"The medicine voice will talk to the Spotted Snake very quick," he solemnly declared.

And thereupon he took new importance to himself and was paid much respect by the onlookers, for it was but seldom that a medicine revealed itself in tangible form.

Then the man from across river shrewdly asked—

"Why did the medicine fly over the Delaware village if it is a Shawnee medicine?"

"The Delawares are our grandfathers. A strong Shawnee medicine will help the Delawares," promptly replied the Snake. "The medicine voice will speak and say what shall be done with the white prisoners. It will bring a very big bag of talk."

This seemed to satisfy the Delaware. My back began to feel cold, and I wondered if Hate-Evil Durgin's ingenuity had shaped for me a path that would lead me to the stake. Old Podge groaned and bitterly complained:

"Such a cussed piece of work! Now he's gone and just the same as told White Tom I'm cooped up in this hut! Now White Tom will be over here with an ax in his hand!"

Durgin hissed for him to be silent as a white man began talking. I recognized Girty's voice although he spoke in the Shawnee tongue.

"They tell me at Blue Jacket's lodge that something has been seen flying in the sky near the Delaware village; something that flew like a bird but faster than any bird can fly."

"This Delaware man saw it," answered the Snake. "It flew toward the rising sun. It was Spotted Snake's medicine voice. It will talk very soon about two white men."

"It is the Snake's medicine showing the way to the Alleghany River and telling the Delawares their grandchildren will help them overrun the land far beyond the Alleghany. Spotted Snake's medicine is very wise; it sees ahead for many moons. It sees the corn in the black silk before it is planted. It sees all white people killed or pushed out of the Ohio country."

This praise of the Snake's medicine, attributing to it all the powers of a prophet, made our captor feel very proud. He had been content to consider it his guardian genius and limited in power to watching over his personal destiny. The renegade was shrewdly utilizing the incident to divert the Snake's thoughts from his prisoners and to encourage the Delawares to believe that it was a portent forecasting a wide destruction of the white race. I knew the Snake's chest was puffed with pride as he said:

"The voice will soon call us to the east and south. Where it leads, Weyapiersenwah's children and their grandfathers, the Delawares, will burn and kill."

Girty spoke further in the same strain and then announced a desire to talk with us. When he entered the cabin the Snake and the guards stood in the doorway, shutting out the light. The renegade spoke in English, which the Indians were slow to comprehend even in spots, and hurriedly told us:

"Something's happened to excite the Injuns. I've tried to twist it round so's it won't be used to start a fire under you men. Some one saw a streak of light play across a cloud or the glint of sunlight on a bird's wing, and it's enough to stir 'em all up. But the man Durgin won't be hurt, no matter how it goes; and I think I've put some new thoughts in the Snake's head. If he can be held off for a few days McKee ought to be here to take a hand.

"Blue Jacket wanted me to do what I could to help you two. He's a smart Injun. Minute he heard the medicine talk he knew it would mean the stake or Detroit for you. He knows McKee will want to take you to Detroit to be questioned by Colonel Richard England, commandant. The Yankee will stay here. He ain't in any danger."

"What if the Snake hears his voice telling him to roast us?" I asked.

With an indifference that chilled my spine he readily replied:

"Oh, if he gits the notion you two oughter burn, then even Blue Jacket can't save you. At least he won't."

For military reasons Girty believed it would be wise to save us from the fire and profit by our knowledge of the conditions in Wayne's camp. When convinced that we must be fed to Spotted Snake's medicine it would not disturb his appetite for dinner in the least to tarry and watch us being roasted.

This cold-blooded unconcern was more shocking to my nerves than the wrathful outbursts of Jim Girty. I know I fell back from him as he stood there in the small room and quietly weighted the possibilities of our living or dying. I believed what legend had insisted upon, that he was as lacking in humanity as a bolt of lightning or a hungry wolf.

"But my business here is a double one," he ran on. "Just step out here and see if there's light enough for you to read a piece of writing."

Perhaps one reason why Girty never got any higher than interpreter and scout in the Crown's service was his inability to read or write. I stepped out into the twilight, took the writing and managed to read:

At Tarke's village, or Cranetown.
To Simon Girty, Esquire:—

I have just arrived here after a hard run from Cincinnati, where I was seen and known after I had inlisted in the Army. I was arrested and Sentenced to be hung. I have suffered Much and must rest a few days. I send this by a Man who got into troubble at Wayne's camp. He can be trusted. If this finds you at Blue Jacket's village send back word if I shall Report to Col. McKee at Detroit, or on the Maumee. Wayne's army is well Drilled and will make a Strong fight.—(*Signed*) Quain.

TO BE CONTINUED

Slants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

The Jailer

I LOCKED a fellow in the jail today,
A sort of bleary fellow, hungry-faced,
Who looked at me with hate. I heard him say
"My God! He doesn't care that I'm disgraced."
I locked him up for things most common, done
By common men, who go the common way,
We are alike, we humans; one and one
We pluck the flowers that bloom beside the way.
I met a woman on my beat tonight,
Whose young fair face bore signs of sorrow's tears;
Stealing away she tried to keep from sight;
I wondered then what was it caused her fears.
"Lady," I said—she quickly turned her head,
A lovely head, on lovely shoulders set,
Her great wide eyes were full of awful dread,
And her young cheeks were white, and glistened wet.
"My husband, sir," she said, her voice was low,
"I can not find him, and I love him so."

This is a true tale, my son, and the judge and marshal gave me —— for unlocking the jail and turning the poor —— over to his wife. I refused to give his name, or anything, and that was the end of *that!*

"The Jailer," copyright, 1923, by Bill Adams.

PROOF MARKS ON OLD FIREARMS

by Lewis Appleton Barker

THOSE unfamiliar with ancient firearms are frequently puzzled by finding certain characters or letters, or both, stamped on and into the barrel of a gun or pistol. In their ignorance they take them to be the initials or mark of the maker, and from these seek to gain light as to his name.

It is true that Spanish and German arms usually have, instead of the maker's name, a seal, frequently of gold, depicting characters—animals and letters—from which, if possessed of a list of such seals, one might determine the manufacturer of the weapon, and hence its approximate date. English and French gunmakers, however, if marking the arm at all, did so by placing their name and that of their town on the lock-plate or barrel, or on both.

The marks known as "proof marks" were stamped on, usually by a Government official, after he had tried out and "proven" the arm to be all right. As a rule the method of "proving" was to load the piece with several times its normal amount of powder and shot, and then discharge the same. If it survived the test it was considered "proven" satisfactorily. Thus, as different marks were not adopted until a certain date, we may ordinarily be assured that an arm bearing them was not manufactured before that date.

Up to the middle of the reign of Henry VIII (1525) all military and other firearms were purchased on the Continent. In 1543 Henry induced two Flemings, Peter Bawd and Peter Van Collen, to open up shops in London as gunmakers.

The business increased until at the close of Elizabeth's reign (1603) there were in London thirty-seven gunmakers. Under James I, a pacific monarch to whom the sight of a naked sword-blade was a terror, the trade diminished until but five remained in business.

Under his successor, the sportsmanlike Charles I, the business so increased that the London gunmakers became, in 1637, a chartered corporation. Their proof mark was the letter "A" and a crown.

This was the commencement of compulsory proving of firearms in England. Charles had all the arms in the country examined and repaired by seven gunsmiths whom he appointed about 1640. These went about the country with their assistants to "survey, make, alter, mend, dress, repair, prove, and stamp if need be all guns fit for service."

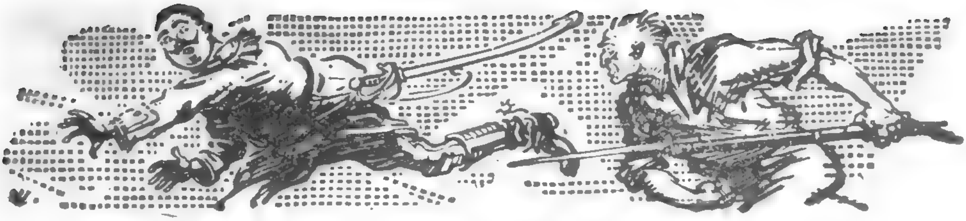
Of course many of these arms came sooner or later to America. At the period of the Revolution, and before, one of the best known proof marks was the London one, "G. P." interlaced or in a monogram underneath a crown. There were also private ones of well-known makers such as Nock, the Ketlands, Egg, Sharpe, etc.

Another proof mark of that time was two cross scepters underneath a crown. A pistol or gun bearing this mark was probably made prior to or during the Revolution. But in 1813 there was added to this mark the letters "B. G. P." in the angles of the scepters. Hence an arm bearing the letters in addition to the scepters must have been made later than 1813. Sometimes both marks will be found on the same arm, which would indicate the earlier date of manufacture, and that it had been proved again at a later period than 1813 and marked a second time.

In addition to these marks, Government-owned arms frequently had upon the lock-plate the word "Tower," a crown with "G. R." under it and a broad arrow or arrow head. The word "Tower" indicated that the arm had been inspected at the Tower of London and declared satisfactory by a Government agent. Or if it had been inspected in Ireland it was stamped "Doublin Castle" with the remainder the same.

The large crown first appeared during the reign of Queen Anne. "G. R.," of course, stood for "George Rex" or King George, and was on all Government arms during the reigns of the four Georges, or up to 1830.

Some of these weapons were issued to the colonies, the militia and privateersmen, as well as to the standing army. So that more surely to mark those which were for the use of the regular army, the broad arrow or arrow-head were added to those designed for such use. Another well-known and early mark was a crown with the letter "V" underneath, indicating "viewed," or having been examined.



CAPTAIN TOOKLE TAMES A QUEEN

by Thomas Topham

Author of "The Rescue Valiant" and "One Young, One Widow, One Old."

THE tide was out and the lumber schooner *City of Kuplunk* swung so low against the wharf that the mate had been forced to draw in the gangplank. However, the big steam cranes didn't mind a few feet more of lifting, and lumber and shingles in great cable slings swung busily from ship to dock.

Captain Tom Tookle came out of the ship's galley with a beef sandwich in his hand and looked over the busy scene. His leather vest was unbuttoned, and he was in his shirt sleeves. A mate's cap was perched jauntily on his thatch. He jumped to the deckload of lumber and dodged the rattling crane hooks as he made his way forward to see if the unloading was going ahead in the right way.

All about him there uprose the creak and rattle and roar of machinery, the bellowed orders of mates and dock foremen, the snort of donkey engines, as ship after ship, swinging at the long Los Angeles wharves, dumped their odorous lumber cargoes, fresh from the northern forests. Longshoremen sweated and grunted at the task of piling huge bundles of shingles into boxcars on the wharf; others standing in open cars ducked swinging cranes and methodically piled boards with a rhythmic bang.

Captain Tookle reached a point of vantage, and his eyes took in the orderly turmoil. He watched a huge derrick on his own ship with its swinging load of shingles ready to be deposited on the wharf, a longshoreman with hand outstretched waiting to guide it to its proper position. With a blazing eye the skipper beheld the laborer give the shingles a surreptitious shove that sent them crashing against a waiting boxcar. Smashed bundles showered to the wharf.

"Hey there, you!" yelled the skipper, and burst into profanity.

He knew the symptoms. An I. W. W. longshoreman—the skipper called him a Wobbly—was undertaking a little piece of impromptu sabotage.

The longshoreman peeked over the wharf insolently at the irate skipper.

Knowing that the gangplank was in, and believing that escape would be easy, he made an age-old gesture of derision.

With a roar of rage Captain Tookle jumped for a sling that had just come aboard to be loaded, put his foot in the big hook and signaled the engineer to hoist. Quickly but smoothly he swung high and higher, and as the crane moved over he was deposited gently before the astonished longshoreman.

But that was all that was gentle about the performance. The longshoreman was stretched flat under the skipper's big-knuckled fist and a second who started to his assistance shared the same fate, after which the captain marched cockily down the wharf to refresh himself with a five-cent cigar.

"Captain Tookle Tames a Queen," copyright, 1922, by Thomas Topham.

Amos Peabody, a wiry, nervous gentleman, watched the performance with eagerness almost amounting to absorption.

"The hard-boiled son-of-a-gun," he muttered to a fat wharf officer who was loafing near.

"Yeah, there ain't no monkeyin' with Tom," replied the officer, and laughed.

Mr. Peabody turned and followed the skipper down the wharf. Mr. Peabody was an oil man, a mighty operator who dealt in millions, and upon his success in negotiating with the testy skipper hung one of his important deals. He had regarded the mission as important enough to come down personally to the wharf to catch the lumber-boat captain and hire him. He didn't like the captain's bucko methods, he didn't like his manners, he didn't like anything about him; but business was business with Mr. Peabody. So Mr. Peabody hastened his steps in the wake of the marching skipper.

"Hey, cap," he hailed as he drew near.

Captain Tookle turned around fiercely, ready to do battle again.

"Can it, captain; can it," said Mr. Peabody, relapsing into the language of the oil-fields; but he didn't go too near.

Captain Tookle squinted his eyes and took in the figure of the oil man.

"Well, I'll be doused,"he roared, "if it ain't old Peabody! What're you a-doin' down here, an' why didn't you come on board?"

Plainly the encounter with the longshoremen had put the skipper in a good humor. Mr. Peabody was encouraged. He shook hands.

"Got a deal coming up," Mr. Peabody explained, "and as long as I needed a tough—as long as I needed somebody like you, I thought I'd look you up. Can you come up to town with me?"

"Sure," said the skipper.

Mr. Peabody jammed the captain into his big automobile and roared him to an up-town building. He bounced into his private office, followed by the skipper. Clerks looked up and wondered who the uncouth person was following the big boss, speculated idly as to how much he would get for a lease and went back to work.

Mr. Peabody ran his fingers through his hair. Dealing with Captain Tom Tookle was ticklish business.

"In the first place, Tookle," he opened genially, "you'd never have been fired out of our service if I had been here. You're one of the few skippers we had who could obey orders and keep his mouth shut."

Captain Tookle's chest swelled out at this praise from the big oil chief.

"I don't talk's much as some," he agreed.

Mr. Peabody considered this as encouraging. He decided that he had better take the skipper somewhat into his confidence

"Well anyway," said the oil man, "old Comstock Skuykendall is out here on the Pacific coast. You know of him, at least. He's the New York banker and chairman of our board, and we've got to run down to Puerto del Caballo on the Lower California coast. Of course Cap Williams had to break a leg just now, and he can't take us down on the *Signal Belle*, so I want you to take charge of the yacht for the trip and keep still about it. Will you do it?"

Captain Tookle came to life. This was too good, getting back with the Peabody oil interests like this.

"Sure I'll do it," said the skipper. "How long you want the *Signal Belle* fitted out for an' when do we start?"

"Two weeks. Start right away," ordered Mr. Peabody. "Skuykendall will have along a couple of secretaries, two or three geologists and their wives, his own chef and, oh yes, his wife will be with us. I want you to get this part right, cap. Mrs. Skuykendall is a high society queen, the kind you read about but seldom see—hot stuff. Ver-ry exclusive. So be sure to see that she has the best of quarters and everything she wants. We don't want any rough stuff while she's around."

"O. K.," rumbled the captain. "Everything the little lady wants."

Mr. Peabody smiled. He was sorry that he didn't have a spruce young skipper to command the yacht, but he couldn't sacrifice trustworthiness for looks. Captain Tom Tookle was close-mouthed and honest, he knew from past experience.

"Say, captain," Mr. Peabody suggested, "get you a uniform and charge it up to us. By the way, you've been around in Mexico considerable. Where did you spend most of your time down there?"

"Ensenada *carcel*," replied the skipper briefly.

"*Carcel?*"

"Jail, in plain United States," explained the skipper. "Yeah, they kept me in jail there two-three months for gun-runnin', an'

I'd be there yet if I hadn't tore down part of the jail an' clumb out. A Mex *carcel* ain't no place for a white man. Lice? Ye never see——"

Mr. Peabody held up his hand.

"Ugh," he said disgustedly. "Get out, captain, and get that new uniform. Resign from that lumber tub and fit up the *Belle*."

The captain departed.

Mr. Comstock Skuykendall of New York, fussy and irritated over the delay of his contemplated trip, followed soon into Mr. Peabody's private office.

"Got a skipper?" Mr. Skuykendall barked at Mr. Peabody. "I've laid around long enough on one excuse or another."

Mr. Peabody nervously admitted that he had hired a captain.

"Went down and got one myself," added Mr. Peabody. "Jerked him off a ship, a fellow who was formerly with us."

"Reliable? Close-mouthed?" snapped Mr. Skuykendall.

"Both," declared Mr. Peabody. "He's a little uncouth; but he's a good seaman, and he speaks Spanish."

Mr. Skuykendall was mollified.

"It's a warm tip we're going on, Peabody," he said almost genially. "If it's what I think it is we'll put through a concession and do a little wild-catting before Mex Pete, the Standard or anybody have waked up."

"Where did you get this tip?" inquired Mr. Peabody curiously.

"Remember old Ashbaugh?" asked Mr. Skuykendall. "Always poking into queer places after oil and generally locating it. He sized up the big Mexican field before anybody else knew its value, and if I'd been wise I'd have got in there with both feet. He disappeared in Lower California, and we heard vague rumors that he was killed by Yaqui Indians.

"Well, he was killed, but he had found oil land for sure. I've got that straight. If we can locate where he was killed, and I think we can, we're right on the spot. We'll drop down there like it's a pleasure jaunt, investigate, and if it's what I think it is we'll put Lower California on the oil map."

And, unrolling a grip full of maps, he and Mr. Peabody plunged into the pleasures of tracing the supposed location of liquid gold.

* * *

CAPTAIN TOOKLE, resplendent in his new uniform but still tough-looking, stood at the gangplank of the *Signal Belle* and watched the crowd come on board. Mr. Peabody idled beside him.

Mr. Skuykendall came up the plank, followed by his high society queen. They passed Mr. Peabody with a cool nod. Captain Tookle might have been a mast, and a very insignificant one, so far as they were concerned. Although the captain had no society aspirations, the complete ignoring of him galled his honest soul.

"Whew!" said the captain with heavy sarcasm in what he considered a confidential tone of voice, but which in reality rumbled hoarsely. "Who's the dame in the glad rags? Looks sweet enough to kiss."

Mrs. Skuykendall turned slowly and haughtily and surveyed the skipper through a lorgnette. Mr. Peabody, his face red with embarrassment, hastened toward his guests.

"Mr. Peabody, who is the rude person beside the gangplank?" drawled Mrs. Skuykendall, her well-bred voice hitting the captain's ear like a slap. "Is he a steward? If so, I think he should be discharged."

Captain Tookle needed no lorgnette to glare. Steward, was he? Without artificial aid he directed a malignant glare at Mrs. Skuykendall; and there, as the hostile glances met and clashed, was born a mortal feud, a deadly enmity.

Mr. Peabody hastily covered the situation by showing his guests to their staterooms, after which he came back to the captain and directed a few hot, sarcastic remarks at the skipper's idea of humor.

"For Heaven's sake," he concluded, "keep your mouth shut about people. That woman's husband owns about half of the Peabody Oil Company, and she's one of the most famous society leaders in America, an aristocrat of aristocrats. The idea of you remarking that you'd like to kiss her!"

"Kiss her!" fumed Captain Tookle. "Can't you take a joke? I wouldn't kiss her for the best full-rigged ship ever floated. No, not for two of 'em I wouldn't kiss her or let her kiss me."

He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand in anticipation of how horrible such a kiss would be, and, sneaking off from Mr. Peabody, ordered the lady's six trunks put in the bottom of the hold under a pile of assorted junk.

Mrs. Skuykendall raved; but she wore the same dress in which she had boarded the yacht all through the voyage, and she bitterly suspected why. She was not backward in retaliatory measures. Her scathing criticisms in Captain Tookle's hearing of the manner in which the yacht was handled drove the skipper frantic with rage. He was no adept at adroit repartee. He could use a conversational club with the best of them, but with Mr. Peabody's warning ringing in his ears he was driven to a haughty dumbness that sat poorly upon him.

Mr. Peabody was highly entertained at the skipper's misery. He imparted to one of the party, in strict secrecy, the reason for the captain's glumness, and within an hour everybody on board except the two principals and Mr. Skuykendall was giggling over the mariner's *faux pas*.

"Have a little kiss this morning, cap?" teasingly invited one of the women on board, holding up bewitching lips; and Captain Tookle, with a growl like a stricken bear's, dropped the glasses he was using and fled abruptly.

Puerto del Caballo—so named because it had once been a port from which horses had been shipped—lay blistering in the sun of Baja California when the yacht *Signal Belle* poked her pretty nose into the harbor and a jolly group disembarked.

Natives watched in listless fashion; dogs bristled and snarled at their heels; and thinly clothed, dusky children tumbled about them, stealing here and there. But the sleepy little Mexican town soon changed into a hive of bustling activity. The *jefe politico*—chief and only executive—was complacently willing, after a brief but remunerative interview, that the whole town of Puerto del Caballo should be turned over to the visitors.

The party had intended living on the ship, but in the last few knots of the trip the engines had kicked up a fuss. They prepared to send the vessel back to Ensenada for repairs.

"Oh, how thrilling! We'll rough it down here. It's so picturesque!" cried Mrs. Skuykendall when she was urged to go with the vessel; and the other women agreed with her.

So Mr. Peabody rented a rambling adobe building, and they moved in things to make them comfortable and a phonograph for entertainment. Captain Tookle wanted to go with the yacht; but because he spoke the lingo of the town, half-Spanish, half-Indian, Mr. Peabody made him stay.

At the last minute Captain Tookle advised that the members of the party place their money and what valuables they didn't need in the ship safe. There was a rush to do this; and the vessel, under command of the mate, limped its way out while the party stood on the rotting wharf and felt a tinge of homesickness.

Mr. Peabody and Mr. Skuykendall wasted no time in vain regrets that they couldn't live on the comfortable craft. They hired the only team of horses in the village and a wagon of sorts, and prepared to hunt for the place where poor Ashbaugh had met an untimely fate. They happily began loading the wagon for the trip next day when Mr. Peabody had a desire to consult Jim Armstrong, his chief geologist. Armstrong wasn't at the rented house; he wasn't at the barn. The nervous little oil man danced a hornpipe of frenzy and began a wild search. He depended much upon his geologist.

Captain Tookle caught his little employer by the arm. The skipper hated to do it, but duty was duty.

"Mr. Peabody," he hoarsely whispered, "I see Jim a little while ago down in the *cantina* a-lappin' up *clarete* an' mineral water. It's jest barely possible— These drinks down here——"

Mr. Peabody glared at his skipper in dismay, clutched his arm and started away.

"Stewed to the gills," grimly remarked the skipper, and he was putting it mildly, when he saw the geologist lolling in the *cantina*, fondly holding to a dirty native.

Mr. Peabody dragged his employee out of the little adobe saloon and marched him to the house they were occupying, where Armstrong was put to bed and locked in. The oil man was not greatly disturbed over Jim Armstrong's delinquency. Jim was a good worker; and certainly Jim had no intention of throwing him down. The heat and the unaccustomed foreign drinks had done it. But he was determined that it shouldn't happen again, or to any others of his party. They had not come down to escape Volstead but to hunt for oil.

"Call that fat friend of yours," Mr. Peabody directed the skipper, meaning the *jefe politico*, "and make him close that joint while we're here."

Captain Tookle licked his own dry lips, looked wistfully into the *cantina* and obeyed. In picturesque but vigorous Spanish he talked to the official. The *jefe politico* shrugged his fat shoulders till his big sombrero tilted over his nose, and refused to close the saloon.

"It has never been done," the *jefe* protested. "The people, the dear public of which I am only the servant, the *Americano* must understand, would not stand for such a proceeding. Impossible!"

Captain Tookle shook a large and dangerous-looking fist under the *jefe politico's* bulbous nose. The skipper was no diplomat.

"You close that *cantina*," he ordered, "or I'll close up the whole —— town. *Sabe?* I've got enough people here to tear your mud town to pieces."

The *jefe politico* was shocked, but he was helpless. He promptly closed the *cantina*, and Mr. Peabody and the captain went cockily on their way back to prepare for the expedition.

The *jefe* stalked gloomily to his "office" on the plaza, placed his feet on the table and considered the deadly insult that had been cast upon himself, upon the people, upon the town, upon the nation, by these gringos. He dared not protest, for the governor was notoriously friendly to Americans, and besides he had no force at his disposal.

At last he reached a decision, grunted and took down his feet. He produced a stub pencil, and laboriously he indited a note to his friend and partner, General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza, one of the last bandits of the good old days, who with a handful of men levied a precarious toll on the country. Besides, General Urquiza was half-owner with himself of the *cantina*.

It would be easy picking, the *jefe* told his bandit friend, to swoop down on Puerto del Caballo, capture the crazy *Americanos*, loot them and if they were lucky the ship too when it returned, lock them all in jail and disappear. Of course there would be no resistance on his part, and afterward they would divide the loot.

This note he dispatched by a trusted messenger back to the bandit's lair near the Laguna Salada and sat down to await events.

Events were not long in happening. Mr. Peabody, with his now intensely sober geologist and the other men of the party, was returning in his rickety wagon from a fruitless search for the grave of the unfortunate Ashbaugh. Both Mr. Peabody and Mr. Skuykendall were disheartened. Somewhere thereabout Ashbaugh had found land which his expert eye had picked as having great possibilities as a prospective oil-field. They knew to a certainty that he had been on the spot when a band of marauding Yaqui Indians had killed him. But they had missed the place and their own geologists gave them no encouragement as to the look of things generally.

They had reached the edge of the village when a volley of shots startled them. Unwonted activity showed in the town. Dogs barked, a woman screamed, another. More shots.

"They're pullin' off a fight over there," said Captain Tookle. "The wimen folks are all there alone. Le's hurry."

Before they had time to move, however, a cavalcade bore down upon them, deployed fan-shaped, and galloped up. Captain Tookle, sensing an ambush, grabbed the whip and desperately attempted to escape. Two Mexicans leaned over from their horses and coolly shot the horses dead. The wagon was efficiently stopped.

The leader swept off his hat gallantly and broke out in Spanish.

"What does he say?" asked Mr. Peabody anxiously of Captain Tookle.

The skipper removed his own cap and scartched his head dubiously.

"He's very polite," said the skipper, "but he says we are all his prisoners. He says he's the famous General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza an' so forth, or something like that, an' he says he's captured the town. He says we're to come along with him or he'll splatter pieces of folks all over the landscape——"

"He can't do it," bellowed Mr. Peabody. "Tell that mouthful of names he can't do it. It's an outrage. Here I go and pay that fat friend of yours fifty dollars to have the run of the town, and this guy comes in and messes things up. And he's shot the only two horses in the town. Where's the police?"

"Ain't none," said the skipper.

The general burst into another outbreak of Spanish. Captain Tookle listened attentively and at the end pointed to Mr. Peabody, who shrank back as the finger sought him out.

"What's he want to know now?" asked Mr. Peabody anxiously.

"He says he's owner, or part owner, of that *cantina* an' wanted to know who closed it," the skipper interpreted.

"And you told him I did? You passed the buck?" bawled Mr. Peabody in alarm and horror.

Mr. Peabody howled to the world his fixed conviction that Captain Tookle was a dog that had bitten the hand that fed him.

"What do you think he'll do?" he demanded.

"Probably shoot you," replied Captain Tookle, bristling at Mr. Peabody's bitter reproaches and not caring much at the time if the bandit did.

GENERAL URQUIZA was energetic for a Mexican, and he marched his prisoners promptly to the *carcel*. There they were greeted by the women of the party, who had been taken captive by a small detachment. Under pretense of searching for weapons the bandits removed the small amounts of money and valuables the visitors had refrained from placing in the ship safe. The general was disappointed, almost disgusted, at the smallness of the haul.

Captain Tookle eyed the small, dirty jail with a disapproving squint.

"Look here, general," he said to the bandit leader, "you're going pretty far with this. I am a shipmaster under the United States regulations, and if you put me in jail you are going to hear from Uncle Sam."

The general hesitated. He had no desire to be the cause of an international episode, but he had locked up Americans many times before and had not got into trouble. Besides, these prisoners would soon be freed, as soon as he had got safely out of the way. The *jefe politico* would apologize to them, curse the bandits roundly for effect, and all would be lovely.

"I am sorry," the bandit chieftain apologized, "but the *captión* must go in."

The skipper waggled his whiskers in the general's face and scowled.

"I warn you," he said fiercely, "that you are locking up a man who will start the whole United States on your trail."

The general hesitated again. The hard-faced skipper looked like a man who made no idle threats, but one who, if he did make a threat, would carry it out to the letter.

"You may stay out," he conceded, "but you are subject to the law of fugitives."

"That is, if I jump and run I am shot?" asked the skipper.

"Exactly."

"If I jump and run you may shoot me," agreed the captain, "but you be mighty careful that I am jumping and running when you do shoot. The whole United States will be torn up if anything happens to me."

General Urquiza herded the rest of the party into the one-room *carcel*. Mr. Peabody looked through the little barred window and berated the skipper with words that almost scorched his tongue.

"For a double-crossing son-of-a-gun," he roared, "I'd pick you to lead the world. The way you throw down your friends and benefactors makes me want to erect a statue to Benedict Arnold as a gentleman of honor. You're a treacherous——"

"Shut up, you —— fool," bowled Captain Tookle, and he picked up a piece of loose adobe from the street and hurled it at the grating.

Mr. Peabody failed to duck in time, but he wiped the dust out of his eyes and continued his blasting remarks about Captain Tookle to his fellow jailbirds.

Captain Tookle retired to the deserted headquarters of the oil-hunters, sat down on the lonesome porch and considered the situation. Under the notorious law of fugitives if he so much as walked about the streets he might be shot. If he remained indoors he might be shot too, as a fugitive in hiding. Almost any Mexican with a gun was entitled to take a crack at him for luck. It was a dismal outlook.

The skipper's gloomy forebodings were interrupted by General Urquiza himself. He sat down beside the captain.

"Your friends are not very rich, I take it," said the general in Spanish. "Their effects, which are now held in safety for them, would bring scarcely a hundred pesos, Mex."

A crafty light came into the captain's eyes.

"Most of it is on the ship," he explained.

"The ship?" asked the general casually. "When will it return?"

"About a week," replied the skipper.

"Ah-h-h," breathed the general. "I shall keep your friends safely until the ship is back. Then they shall be released and escorted on board."

Captain Tookle followed perfectly the general's train of thought. The bandit would surprize the ship with him, Captain Tookle, as the bait, grab what he wanted and betake himself and company rapidly back to the impenetrable and trackless hills of Lower California.

"Very well," said the skipper with a cold glint in his eyes, "but you are not to harm me. I do not care what you do to those people, but when my ship comes in I intend to leave."

"*Amigo*," said the general genially, "in the meanwhile I shall be constrained to feed these people. I presume that they have quantities of supplies in this house, and the food would help their menu. Native food is not agreeable to them, I take it."

The bandit was politely robbing the place, but the captain acquiesced. He watched a gang of cutthroats move out supplies, trunks, and lastly the prized phonograph and its records. The phonograph was installed in the reopened *cantina*, and hilarity reigned.

Captain Tookle continued to sit glumly on the porch, his cap tilted over his eyes, as the looting went on. The genial general tried to cheer him up but failed.

"I must provide a cook for the *Americanos* in the *carcel*," the general observed. "A native cook would perhaps not be to their taste. It would indeed be conferring a favor upon me if you would select a cook from among themselves."

He arose politely. Captain Tookle arose too.

They marched up to the *carcel*. Mr. Skuykendall's chef was in truth in the jail. He had been caught at the rented house and included in the bandits' round-up.

Captain Tookle squinted through the small window in search of the chef to point him out, when his eye lighted upon Mrs. Skuykendall, the woman who had heaped indignities upon him. A wicked thought entered the skipper's mind. He called the general.

"See the plump woman over by the wall?" he hissed in the general's ear. "She is a surpassing cook."

Without more ado Mrs. Skuykendall was dragged from the *carcel* and installed as cook in the tumble-down shack at the rear. And for the first time in her aristocratic life she smelled the smell of pork and beans as the aroma arose from a stove. She cooked with a guard standing over her—but she cooked.

Time hung heavy on the general's fat hands as he waited for his ship to come in. He and the *jefe* drank much in their joint *cantina* and played the *Americanos'* phonograph. Loudly from out of the door there blasted a continuous roar of jazz music.

Also the gallant general hung about the *carcel* cook-house. He walked in pertly to see how the cooking was progressing and to sample the food, a practise of which he was fond. The cook, the aristocratic Mrs. Skuykendall, was bending anxiously over a pot of beans. She had scorched the last mess, and the remarks of her captive boarders had seared her soul as nothing in her social career had ever done. She wasn't going to scorch this pot of beans if human carefulness or a human nose could prevent it.

There was a pleasing plumpness about Mrs. Skuykendall as she bent over the beans that struck the general as decidedly appealing. She was a cook; he was a general. The general slapped a heavy hand on her shoulder, and as she turned in surprize he chucked her under the chin with a pudgy finger and planted a loud kiss on her astonished mouth.

Mrs. Skuykendall gave one outraged, indignant gasp, recovered, and there ensued a scene that firmly embedded in the general's head the idea that he had kissed a wildcat in disguise. At the end of a brief period of marked activity a bedraggled general leaped madly from the cook-shack, puffing, and hastily turned a corner of the *carcel* as a large iron skillet sailed past his devoted head. The odor of burned beans permeated the air, and as the general disappeared, Mrs. Skuykendall abandoned the pursuit and jumped back to her kitchen.

General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza halted as he struck the street in front of the *carcel* and assured himself that he was not pursued. He rearranged his disheveled uniform. His hat was in the kitchen, but he dared not go back after it. He put on a bold face and marched back to his "headquarters," where he appropriated his siesta-enjoying aide's hat, and sat down to map out a campaign of revenge.

His gallant soul was boiling. That a common cook had repelled his innocent little kiss was past belief. If she were not a woman and an *Americana* he knew what he would do. An adobe wall at sunrise and a firing-squad would avenge his honor.

His thoughts strayed to Captain Tookle. That hard-boiled individual had bluffed him, he suspected, into leniency. He, General Urquiza, the prospective liberator of Mexico! Sweat came to his brow. He must *not* be weak! He could not shoot either one! No! But there were other ways! Ah, but they were two of a kind! Two of a kind!

General Urquiza brought his feet to the floor with a thump that awakened his hatless aide.

"Bring them to me!" he roared.

"Certainly, excellency; certainly," stammered the aide. "But whom shall I bring, your excellency? Whom, I ask? Who has incurred your excellency's displeasure? I ask you! I implore you!"

"Ah-h-h," hissed the general, "the cook at the *carcel*, the fat, *frijole*-burning cook, and the brave, blustering *capitán* of the ship. Bring them here, escorted by an army of men who shall see what their brave general shall do."

A red-faced but aristocratic cook and a belligerent ship captain faced the bandit general. It was unfortunate that the skipper was the only one who spoke both English and Spanish.

"You," said the general, pointing at Mrs. Skuykendall, "I had picked for chief cook at the palace when my ambitions are realized. You—" he pointed at the captain—"should have had a high place in my Navy. But you have both disappointed me."

Captain Tookle turned to Mrs. Skuykendall.

"The general says you are a bum," the skipper wickedly translated. "He says you disappointed him."

Mrs. Skuykendall swelled with anger, and the general looked anxiously around to see that he had plenty of guards.

"The dirty crook!" croaked Mrs. Skuykendall, her cultured language falling from her like a cloak at this insult. "He tried to kiss me."

Captain Tookle grinned a malicious grin.

"She says, general, that you are sore because she refused you a kiss," he translated.

The guard of honor tittered.

"The vixen!" exploded the general. "She inveigled me into her filthy kitchen on promise of a rare dish, and she planted a kiss on my brow, and I—I—left."

The guard of honor tittered again. General Urquiza glared fiercely about the room.

"I decree that this woman shall be held to ransom," thundered the general. "It is but a short distance to Ensenada, and you, brave *capitán*, shall ride a mule into the city and obtain the money from your ship. It is but a trifling matter. A few thousand pesos, say ten thousand—gold."

Captain Tookle was dumfounded. If he went to the ship and got the money he could never explain to Mr. Peabody. Mr. Peabody, all of them, would think he was in the game if he so much as broached the subject to them. And the skipper was honest.

Mrs. Skuykendall sensed that something was radically wrong. She marched over and hit the skipper a clip on the shoulder.

"What did that old pirate say?" she asked sibilantly. "Did he cast any more aspersions on my character? Did he call me a bum again?"

Captain Tookle shook the lady off abruptly. He was a man of firm mold. He turned to the general.

"I will not do it," he declared belligerently. "You, *señor el general*, are a horse-thief, a stealer from patriots' widows, a degraded sheep-hound who has joined a coyote band, a murderer of his country's liberty, a——"

"Halt!" roared the general, mighty rage in his small eyes, his cheeks puffed out alarmingly, his bosom panting. "Halt! Such words shall never be spoken to the liberator and the man live who utters them. You shall be shot. Ah-h-h! You shall be shot; and I, General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza, shall give you the shot of mercy when the firing-squad is through."

"What's he saying?" demanded Mrs. Skuykendall, enraged at being unable to add her volubility to the conversation.

"He says I'm to be shot," said the skipper. His lips quivered just the slightest.

Mrs. Skuykendall gazed in horrified fascination at the skipper. She hated him from his rough feet to the top of his head; but this shooting business—that was going too far. The penitentiary would be a fitting place for him, a place where he should have been long ago. But death—death was a little too much. Her horror turned to rage.

"You sha'n't do it!" she shrieked at the general. "You sha'n't shoot him!"

She jumped protectingly between the skipper and the bandit leader.

The general understood nothing of what

she said, but her protecting attitude told the story. He laughed sneeringly, turned to a soldier, gave an order. The soldier advanced.

Mrs. Skuykendall reached to the table on which the *jefe politico* kept a few things, mainly as ornaments. She grasped an inkwell, and, taking deadly aim, she hurled the missile at the general. It struck the general's aide, six feet away from the general, and the dusky warrior went down sputtering. The general roared at his aide's discomfiture.

"She is a vixen of a truth," the bandit chieftain screamed. "She is a woman fit only to be tamed. I grant you a respite, *señor el capitán*. She is yours to tame. She shall be your wife. Tame her, or by the Heavens, I shall order both of you shot. I command it."

Captain Tookle gurgled in horror. Never! He preferred shooting, by all odds. He turned a miserable face to the bandit.

"General," he said brokenly, "the *señora* is already married. Her husband is in the *carcel*."

"I dissolve her marriage decrees," declared the general. "I, Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza, declare that she is free. She shall be your wife, bold *capitán*, your dearly beloved wife."

"What's he saying?" demanded Mrs. Skuykendall again.

Captain Tookle's rugged face worked nervously as he turned to his mortal enemy.

"This —— idiot," he blurted, "says I've got to marry you. He says——"

"Never!" shrieked Mrs. Skuykendall hysterically. "Never! I've got one husband——"

The full force of the decree struck her, and she fainted.

SHE awakened to find herself held by two ragged bandits. Beside her the skipper was held by six, and one eye was discolored and puffed. The *jefe politico* was standing before them solemnly saying something in Spanish. He finished.

"I shall kiss the bride in your quaint American custom," said the general, and did.

The bigamous Mrs. Skuykendall struggled free, wiped her mouth and directed a baleful glare at her newly acquired husband.

"'Tain't legal," snarled the skipper.

"I'll say it ain't," said Mrs. Skuykendall, relapsing into the idiom of her chorus-girl, pre-marriage days. "You fixed this thing up with that old outlaw to blackmail me and my husband. Mr. Skuykendall will chew you into mince-meat."

"Lady, Mr. Skuykendall's in jail," said the skipper significantly. "Now listen, you've gotta subside till I can think some way outa this mess. Before ——, I wouldn't have you for a wife if you was queen of the world; but come along here peaceable and le's see if we can't do something."

Captain Tookle grabbed his "bride" by the arm and jerked her toward the door.

"You ain't gittin' nowheres here," said the skipper. "If you don't come along that bucko'll marry you to three or four others, an' then where'll you be?"

Mrs. Skuykendall subsided and followed.

The general grinned at the jerk. Certainly this ship *capitán* had a way of his own. He was a bold, bold *capitán*.

Captain Tookle took his "wife" to the deserted and desolated house which had been headquarters for the party. He shoved her roughly inside.

"Stay in there, for the love of Mike, an' I don't want to hear a yap outa you," he ordered.

The aristocratic Mrs. Skuykendall flung herself on the floor and sobbed out her woes, but not too loud. The captain might hear.

Captain Tookle planted himself on the porch. The blazing sun went down. Mexicans, garbed in their jumble of civilized and barbaric clothes, trailed by. Captain Tookle continued to sit, feet hunched up, his old cob pipe smoking. He was thinking. Darkness descended suddenly. A faint sob came from inside the adobe house. Lights came out in the small windows of the town. Darkness of an almost stifling black seemed to cover all.

Captain Tookle stuffed his pipe in his pocket, arose stiffly and stretched. He walked out to the street, looked up and down. It was almost deserted. Only the *cantina* was lively. "The Star-Spangled Banner" record came sweetly to his ears, bringing with it a wave of homesickness.

The skipper entered the house, drew a flashlight from his pocket and searched the room. It was bare except for a woman's figure on the floor. He entered the back room. Almost bare; but in one corner was an iron bar that upheld a cupboard. The skipper wrenched out the bar and stalked back to the prostrate woman. He stirred her with a heavy foot.

"Git up an' let's git busy," rasped the skipper. "There's goin' to be —— to pay unless you an' me do something. If you want to git that weak-kneed husband of yours outa jail you'd better come along an' show you've got some guts. You can lay there yowlin' if you want to, but like as not some bandit'll bust in——"

Mrs. Skuykendall scrambled to her knees.

"Oh, captain, don't desert me," she wailed. "I'll go with you."

The skipper, clutching the iron bar, led the way, the woman following. He crossed the street, slipped between two dark houses, reached the open ground beyond, marched back of the houses until he reached the *carcel*. He pushed Mrs. Skuykendall to the ground with a rough hand, lay flat himself, squinted through the darkness.

"Stay here," he hissed, "till I git back."

He sneaked up to the *carcel*, peeked around. The lonely guard placed by the general paced conscientiously around the building. As he passed the corner in the rear Captain Tookle brought the iron bar down over his head; and the guard, with a low moan, sank to the ground.

Captain Tookle first possessed himself of the bandit's gun with bayonet attached, then removed the guard's belt and twisted it about his feet. He started to remove his own belt to tie the Mexican's arms, but his trousers were too loose. With the prospect of an active time ahead he could not waste one hand in holding up trousers. He dragged his captive back to Mrs. Skuykendall.

"I've got this bird," hissed the skipper, "but I ain't got anything to tie his hands. Take off your sock."

"Sir!"

"Take off your sock, quick," ordered the skipper. "I've got to have something to tie him up with."

"I will not, you insulting wretch," Mrs. Skuykendall hissed back.

"You take off one of them socks or I'll take it off for you," said the skipper desperately. "An' hurry, for ——'s sake."

With a sob the banker's wife sat down on the hard ground and removed one of her stockings. She flung it at the skipper, replaced her shoe on a bare foot.

"You unutterable brute," she breathed. "I wish I had let that outlaw shoot you."

"All right," agreed the captain. "I wish, sorta, you had too. This sock's kinda flimsy. Better hand me the other one too."

Mrs. Skuykendall argued not nor protested, but tears streaked her face as she removed the other stocking. The skipper tied the bandit's arms to his satisfaction.

"Come on with me an' help," ordered the captain.

Mrs. Skuykendall came on. The skipper went to the jail and began tearing at the adobe wall with his iron bar. Pieces flew out.

"Keep them chunks cleared away," hissed the skipper.

Mrs. Skuykendall, hands torn to bleeding, worked diligently. The skipper breached the wall. He stuck his head in the hole.

"Peabody," he called cautiously.

"Here I am," said a voice. "Is that you, Captain Tookle?"

"Yeah," snapped the captain.

He tore out great chunks of wall.

"Come on out," he invited.

The captives crawled forth.

"Thank Heaven," groaned Mr. Peabody, "you had sense enough to do something at last. Here we've been in jail two days and you loafing around. And we didn't get any supper tonight. Not even burnt beans."

Captain Tookle squinted through the darkness. He really thought that he was entitled to some little credit for his jail-breaking exploit.

"You —— little ingrate," he began, and was preparing to follow with blasting remarks when a wild yell belched forth from the rear.

"——!" cried a voice in Spanish, followed by a series of yelps that called for help and conveyed the information that a loyal guard of the great General Urquiza had been set upon by ruffians, murdered and left helpless at the mercy of carrion-crows.

A quick stream of bandit-soldiers erupted from the *cantina* across the street, running wildly in every direction.

"Good gosh, the ship's scuttled! I forgot to tie up that guy's mouth," said the skipper bitterly. "I hoped he was dead. Follow me," he yelled, and dashed toward the street.

He leveled at the crowd the rifle he had taken from the guard, fired, and there was a mighty scattering.

"Quick, into the *cantina*," ordered the captain, and herded the crowd into the place.

The sleepy *cantinero* he booted into the street and barred the door. A howling mob raged, roared and thundered outside.

"Where's Mrs. Skuykendall?" suddenly asked the captain. "By ——, she's the worry of my life."

He checked the party, but the haughty lady was absent. Mr. Skuykendall insisted they go out after her, but wiser counsel prevailed. They wouldn't do any worse than lock her up, the skipper argued.

There were high doings that night in La Ciudad del Puerto del Caballo. General Urquiza was aroused, the *jefe* was pulled breathless, drunk and half-clad from his bed, bandit-soldiers and citizens were routed out to subdue the rebellious *Americanos*.

General Urquiza considered the situation. The *Americanos* couldn't get away. *Mañana*—tomorrow—he would settle them. It was dark now and unpleasant to fight in the dark when a man might stumble while discreetly retiring from the line of fire. *Mañana*. The general placed his brave troopers around the *cantina* and went back to bed.

Inside the *cantina* the night wore on. Mr. Skuykendall assuaged his grief over his wife in *clarete*, aided by Jim Armstrong. Captain Tookle prowled from window to window, door to door, trailing his precious rifle, bayonet attached. Daylight came with a rush, and at an early hour General Urquiza waddled into the foreground.

Captain Tookle thrust his rifle menacingly through a window. The general halted, whipped out a dirty handkerchief and waved it.

"All right. What is it?" asked the captain in Spanish.

"You will surrender your entire force," announced the general. "I know what civilized warfare is. I am not a savage. You shall all be granted the honors of war; you shall be confined in the *carcel* honorably until your ship arrives and escorted safely on board. Your cook, whom I have locked up to prevent more trouble, shall be restored to you. We wish no trouble; but you have greatly disturbed the fatherland."

"Go to ——!" bellowed the skipper, forgetting his Spanish.

The general caught the "——" and at least sensed the message.

"I shall storm your fort unless you surrender at once," he declared firmly. "My brave soldiers will capture your stronghold in spite of your deadly weapons, and I can not answer for your safety once they are inflamed by battle."

"I give you three to get back to a safe place," said the skipper in Spanish with deadly calm. "*Uno—dos*——"

The general disappeared as if by magic, but shortly thereafter a formidable-looking force formed in the protection of the houses across the street.

"They're going to rush us," said the captain to his anxious crowd. "Git bottles an' clubs. Tear that table over there to pieces. I only got five shots here, an' I won't shoot till they break in."

The Mexicans across the street deployed; a few fired at the *cantina*. But they didn't rush. General Urquiza considered discretion as much the better part of valor. The general called in his brave soldiers, seated himself in the shade and thought bitterly of the *jefe politico* who had got him into this mess.

He wished heartily that he could wash his hands of the affair, but retreat now with honor was impossible. Fighting would do no good. He decided that he would starve out the *Americanos*. He had heard that they were notorious pigs, and if that were so they would soon be howling for food and willing to surrender.

The bandit chieftain called to him his lieutenant.

"Watch them closely," he commanded, "but commit no overt act unless they attempt a sortie. Then, of course, you will use your own judgment."

The general waddled away up the street to his "headquarters," the office of the *jefe* which he had appropriated. He unlocked the door of the small room in the rear where he had imprisoned Mrs. Skuykendall. The lady berated him fiercely. The general hastily withdrew and locked the door again.

THE sun rose high in the heavens. Bandit-soldiers lazed about. Here and there they squatted in the shade of houses and dropped asleep. The lieutenant snored peacefully on a porch across the street from the *cantina*. Ho-hum! Siesta time had arrived. Others stretched. The *Americanos* were safe. They would not, dare not, escape. More joined the siesta. La Ciudad del Puerto del Caballo lay snoozing in the heat.

Captain Tookle watched the lotus-eaters slip off to the land of nod. Mr. Peabody watched also. Old man Skuykendall pulled at his chin whiskers and fumed at Mr. Peabody.

"I'm going out after my wife," he declared. "Those bandits have her locked up somewhere and she'll die of fright."

"Not her," said the skipper, brutally frank. "I'll gamble she's got that old soak Urquiza buffaloed right now."

"I'm going after her," said Mr. Skuykendall doggedly.

"Here, Mr. Peabody," called Captain Tookle, "watch this winder, an' some of the rest watch the one in back. I'll go see if I can find her. 'Tain't really right, all of us here leaving an American lady out in the cold thataway."

Mr. Peabody looked at the captain in surprize.

"I thought—you didn't care—" he said before he recollected that the lady's husband was present.

"Well, I do," snapped the captain. "She's American, ain't she?"

The skipper went to the rear of the *cantina* and looked out. Two guards, rifles on knees, were siesta-ing close by. The skipper grasped his rifle, bayonet still on, and slipped cautiously forth. He made his way back of the silent houses toward the general's headquarters. He strongly suspected that the object of his search was there, inasmuch as he had wrecked the *carcel*.

The sentry was deep in sleep on the porch. The skipper tiptoed within. Stretched on the inevitable office couch was the general, a piece of patched mosquito-netting pinned to the wall and draped down over his face. His hands were folded peacefully over his paunch, which rose and fell. His mouth was open and emitted rhythmic, languorous snores. Across the room the general's aide lay on the floor with his head under the table, face covered with a copy of *La Libertad* to keep off the flies.

The skipper noticed the door with the key in the lock. Softly he turned the key, opened the door. Mrs. Skuykendall sniffled.

"Sh-h-h," whispered the captain.

The lady crept to the door. She was not so dumb in spite of being an aristocrat. Both could have sneaked forth; but the captain wanted to settle affairs with the general while he was about it. He believed he could convince the bandit that he had better call it a dog fall and let them all loose under promise to leave.

With a hand raised in warning to Mrs. Skuykendall, Captain Tookle advanced to the sleeping general and stirred his paunch with the bayonet.

The general opened a sleepy eye and beheld the fierce-looking skipper, bayonet raised over him. He had no means of reading the skipper's benevolent mind and gaining an idea of his peaceful intentions. So far as he could reason or perceive the skipper was on the point of plunging a large and rusty bayonet plump into his vitals.

With a gurgle of horror the general bounced up and leaped for the door, clutching wildly at the entangling mosquito-netting. The skipper gave a surprized start and followed. Mrs. Skuykendall puffingly brought up the rear, rather far behind.

Captain Tookle was no prize-winning runner, but he could beat the puffy general. He caught him in two leaps outside the door.

"Halt!" he cried in Spanish, but the general continued his wild flight.

The skipper closed in again, poked the bayonet forward and jabbed him. The act almost lost the skipper the race. It accelerated the general's speed amazingly. He lifted his big feet in a series of jackrabbit-like jumps that put him half-way down the street before the skipper could catch up with him again.

Captain Tookle aimed a second telling blow from the rear; and the general, at this assault, went down with a despairing roar of agony. Captain Tookle stepped on his legs, his back and his fat neck as he went on over; but his sea legs stood him in good stead, and he wallowed through upright.

An excited mob followed the race down the street. Bandit-soldiers opened their eyes, dropped their guns, hopped up and padded along. Citizens, dogs and children poured out of houses. A fight was a fight to them, not to be missed.

Mr. Peabody, busily attentive to the *cantina* window, had observed with mixed emotions the sudden eruption of the general, the skipper, citizens and soldiers industriously legging it down the street. He didn't know what was going on, but it looked a little dangerous. It appeared as if the town was turning out for a dog-fight or some entertainment of note.

"Hey, folks," he bellowed, "grab something and come on. The skipper's either got that bandit general on the run or he'll be in a —— of a pickle in another minute."

With a chair-leg in one hand and an empty bottle in the other he sallied forth to do or die, followed by his gang, both men and women. They joined the ring of curious humanity in the street.

Captain Tookle, finding the general prostrate on his face, prodded the figure.

"Turn over," he ordered, "an' quit bellerin'. You ain't hurt."

The general failed to respond, so he said it in Spanish. The general turned over and pawed his hands in front of his face like a puppy that deserves and expects a swift kick.

"I surrender! I surrender!" he howled.

Captain Tookle looked grimly around the crowd. No one seemed disposed to interfere.

"Aw, don't kill 'im," said Jim Armstrong, his sympathy aroused.

The skipper placed the bayonet point at the general's throat.

"Say it again, louder," he commanded.

General Urquiza howled out his surrender. He followed with a volley of Spanish to which the skipper gave an attentive ear, bending down to catch the words better. The captain straightened up and looked around the ring of faces until he caught Mr. Peabody.

"Mr. Peabody," he said, "the general wants to enlist with you. He says you can use his men's horses all you want to, and he'll guarantee you protection an' do anything you want."

Mr. Peabody showed a natural hesitation. The general sat up, and again he broke forth earnestly in Spanish. The skipper again translated.

"He says you'd better not go pokin' around those hills without protection. He says another American did it an' was killed by Yaquis around here an'——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Mr. Peabody, tense with excitement. "Can the general take us to where that American is buried or where he was killed? The exact spot?"

The general this time was volubility itself, and his arms waved like windmills.

"He says, 'Yes,'" explained the skipper when the general had at last subsided.

"Yip! Yah!" exploded Mr. Peabody. "How much does he want, and will he play fair?"

Captain Tookle put the questions to the sitting general.

"He says he will," he told Mr. Peabody; "an' he says he wants a hundred dollars gold, American."

"I'll take him up for seventy-five," barked Mr. Peabody, "when the ship comes back. The money's all in the safe."

Captain Tookle parleyed briefly with the general, who nodded.

"He says he'll rely on your honor," said the skipper. "He says seventy-five dollars gold will be O. K., but he says if you'll add ten more gold, he'll execute the *jefe politico*, who he says caused you all this trouble."

"——!" said Mr. Peabody. "If I were going to put on any executions I'd not let an amateur do it. I'd turn the job over to you."

There was a stir in the ring of spectators. Mrs. Skuykendall, who had been outdistanced in the race and who had been compelled to stop three times for breath, had arrived. She pushed through rudely, her skirt flapping about bare legs. She saw the general sitting on the ground, the grim skipper with his bayonet.

"Oh, Captain Tookle, you brave, you wonderful, you darling man!" cried Mrs. Skuykendall; and in front of her husband, in front of all the common herd, she threw a plump pair of aristocratic arms about Captain Tookle's rough neck, and she planted a moist, soul-wracking kiss on his quivering mouth.

Slants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

Under-Dogs

I TOOK a ride yesterday and picked up my customary hobo on the road home. He is a tall, thin, furtive-looking fellow with a furtive voice. I'd know his character by the sound of his voice if I could not see his eyes, or his wrists or his knees or feet.

He is one of the hunted poor beggars who go from farm to farm and from house to house looking for work, and get told by well-to-do American farmers—

"I only hire Japs."

I've been told that several times.

"I only hire Japs."

That's nice, isn't it, now? Meanwhile lest the Japs should not be plentiful enough they leave the gates ajar and let all the scum of Europe dribble in. We are a great nation, and no mistake. What a howl we can make of justice and for freedom while the war-drums roll and the young men are all dolled up in the khaki that tickles our women's eyes! What a noble lot of talking politicians we have got to be sure—and yet our roadways are lined with men of American descent, out of work.

Well, anyway my friend, the "bum" ate supper with me, and read a magazine while I washed the dishes, and slept in my little room, and coughed most of the night. When I told him where to sleep he said—

"Mister, I ain't 'crummy,' I'll gi' you my word to that!"

Well, I'm not in the habit of asking my fellow men if they are "crummy"; but I can spot a crummy-minded man, *i. e.*, a hypocrite, six blocks away, and we've got too many of 'em altogether. I'd like to have some of these bombastic politicians who yap and yawp and howl about the glory of America go tramping down her roadways out of work for a year or so—till they got "crummy." They'd sit down on a fence post and scratch their heads then, and do some *thinking*—perhaps. Though, the most of them are a lot of old women who ought to go back to their wash-tubs. Apologies to old women, here.

It must be the very home of all Freedom indeed where white native-born men are allowed to grow up and to go out untrained to seek a living and to starve if they can't find work.

One of these days, we'll have another war—Mr. Politician will see to that—with Mr. Friend Capitalist to whisper in his ready ear. Then we'll hear the same old blatant shouting that after the war is over there shall be no war again, and that all men shall have justice.

Justice comes only when the poorest people of a nation, when the least able to look after themselves, are given the greatest thought by the rulers. As long as we are too selfish to care for our own native-born poor, too thoughtless to think of the weaker than we, among us, thinking only of apparent empty glories, and echoing the old empty words of "freedom" and "liberty" for just so long we will have discords in the nations.

"Mister," says the hobo at my breakfast-table, "it don't hardly seem fair to me—I had six brothers and three sisters and our folks was poor. We didn't get no schooling and we don't know nuthin' but work. They won't give me work—them furriners gets it all, an' they works so cheap, too. W'y, Mister, I seen in the paper where they wuz talking about shortage of labor, and there's jes' thousands of fellers like me wot won't get no breakfast this mornin' if no one don't take a bit o' pity on 'em, mister.

"We," he adds, "ain't got no chance to get no home, nor to ever have no children. It's good for the children we ain't, too, they'd not have no chance."

And that's just about right.

It's a rum world isn't it? And human beings are funny things, aren't they? They've got to hang gilt draperies on their petty rulers and ever to depart from the quiet ways of justice.

Some day, perhaps, even as individuals must learn the lesson, the nations also will learn the lesson; that of all virtues to be most sought the virtue of humility is best. Then perhaps we'll cease our shouting and clean our hearts; cease to talk so much of freedom and go to seek her; cease to seek earthly greatness, and yearn for a greater thing.

It is not the blare of bugles nor the blast of war-drums on which great nations must rely for power. Power comes from gentleness—best from Truth, who is always hand in hand with Freedom and Justice.

It is not upon externals that America shall ever found a stable might. It is upon far deeper things, things more spiritual, things like Love from man to woman, from neighbor to neighbor, all of us men and all of us neighbors. When we have learned that all men are born free and equal in the sight of the upper Gods, we shall no longer need the drum and trumpet to blare with their empty noises of our might. Our might will shine, our name to be written, so that runners may read without pausing to study the lettering.

Well, I'm no politician. I'm a common working stiff, like the bum at my breakfast-table. We two, despite the misery we've known and seen, and the sears left thereby upon our souls for all of life, can still laugh, even at disaster. We seem to feel, that there is perhaps a something within us that no earthly thing shall starve or bruise. It's a hard way we follow; but it's a man's way. We bear no ill will toward the rich above us; we would like a quiet place to sleep by night, a little warmth upon a frosty morning, a glimmer of brotherhood and truth in all our fellows' faces.

Years ago when I somehow got into the Army Y. M. C. A., I entered one day the administration building of one of the army camps, where all the big Y men were gathered. There were nation-known evangelists there, and great preachers of great churches. They were all of them very learned in the ways of religion, and knew all the ins and all the outs of all the doctrines and of all the creeds. They were happy in the knowledge of their own "salvation."

Personally, salvation has never interested me. If I've a brother who is damned, let me be damned with him. We'll go together, share and share alike, and take the bitterness that comes. My brother may perhaps have had a poorer chance than I—I am in no way his judge, but in all ways his partner, heat or cold.

One of the great religious leaders rose when I entered the room to introduce me to a newly arrived and exceedingly renowned religious leader indeed.

"Bill," says he, "he won't let us call him 'mister.' Bill's always sticking up for the under-dog."

And says I—

"It's a trick I learnt from the Party all you saved birds claim you follow—and it's a strong man's pride."

I was at that time in charge of the Y. M. C. A. work in the camp where were confined some five hundred soldiers who were very much indeed down and out—the venereal company, in fact. Five hundred syphilitics and so forth. It was not just exactly what a man would consider tasty surroundings.

The big man asked me—

"Where are you working now, Bill?"

And when I replied—

"With the venereal company," all that room full of missionaries, preachers, evangelists, and so forth actually sniggered.

"Well," said I, "it may seem funny to you; but for my part I think more of the worst of them than I do of the whole gang of you put together—and so for that matter does this Carpenter Party whom you pretend to follow."

Then I went out of the room. I'd had enough hypocrisy for that day.

Well, pardon my rambling, but the minds of men are curious things, don't you think? And life's interesting—now comedy, now tragedy, now laugh, now ache.

My friend the bum is going now, and I'll go to the front door to see him off.

If Humanity's ship is ever to come to port we've got to stay with her—stay, sink or swim, float with, or sink with her—and sing somehow all the time, blow or calm, snow or thunder.

HIKE'S END

A Complete Novelette

by

Harold Golder

WHEN the second week in December, 1918, began with a bleak, overcast Sunday, the 79th Company Marines found itself descending a winding road cut into the hill above the river Ahr. The afternoon had worn itself half away, and therefore, because mere determination and unthinking pluck were left to the men in place of vigor after ten in the morning, the column was drooping and silent.

Travelers before them had often exclaimed over that road. Surely, for grandeur of towering, forest-clad hills, for wonder of deeply set river, foaming around curves and beating itself against jagged banks, for beauty of smooth highway, cut into mountain-side and built up with masonry, it was worthy of exclamations.

But for all this mere scenery the men had no eyes. They kept them instead on the feet of the men ahead, for it helped their own weary feet to watch these others rise and fall. Sometimes a rifle was shifted from one shoulder to the other or a pack eased when its pressure on one spot had become unbearable. But these motions were unconscious and habitual. Thoughts were far away.

Three weeks before, immediately after the armistice, the regiment had been bivouacked in a willow thicket on the Paris side of the Meuse. There they had spent a week of strange silence, lying on piles of salvaged blankets and shelter-halves, discussing the possibility of arriving home before Christmas, exhaling whiffs of fragrant Durham or Y.M.C.A. cigarets into crisp November air. They were thinking of that blissful week now as they slouched down the gray road which seemed to have no end.

For at the close of the week blankets had been rolled into muddy packs, rifles slung over shoulders, and the column formed; with the rolling-kitchens bumping at the rear, the Second Division, with the 79th Marines in its midst, began its march to the Rhine.

Out of France they marched, the daily kilometers increasing gradually as they went; into Belgium they came, with colors unfurled and the bands playing as they passed through grateful villages; through Luxemburg the column crawled like a weary snake, tiring itself out on precipitous hills and exhausting itself in flanking marches to cover mountain roads where German stragglers might be lurking.

Now they had passed the German boundary. No band played now to lighten their feet as they plodded along; the colors were rolled in mildewed cases. It was drab, inglorious toil, a constant strain on muscles and nerves and souls. And the tobacco was gone! That was the crowning exasperation.

This day, therefore, the words spoken along the line were, for the most part, gruff and fragmentary. Only in the third squad from the head of the company was something almost like conversation maintained. This squad differed in some essentials from the others. There were no members of the original company among them, for one thing—they had joined only three drives before when the Saint-Mihiel offensive had begun. And for another, through all the changes of personnel which the rest of the company had undergone since then, the squad had kept its identity unchanged.

In Belgium when new replacements from the States had raised the company from a scant hundred men almost to its full quota, and while the gaps in other squads had been filled with unknown men, they had stayed shoulder to shoulder. When Bill Graves had been made a corporal and transferred to another squad, they had persuaded him to court demotion by stealing a can of jam from under the eyes of the mess-sergeant and had restored his place in the front rank to him—by bluntly informing the ungainly Georgia mountaineer who filled it that they would prefer to have him march a few ranks to the rear.

Only the corporal was a man who had been in the regiment longer than they, and his presence they welcomed. In fact, in the months since Saint-Mihiel they had forgotten that George Staney was not wholly one with them, and said, "Do you remember back in old Galveston, George," just as they did to each other. And George Staney, in his quiet way, liked his squad and made them his friends. They were calling to him now:

"George, me gallant commander, when do we eat?"

"Got any idea where we billet tonight, George."

"Haven't by any chance got a bag of Durham handy, have you, George?"

There was a groan at this last. George Staney looked up, eased his pack-straps and smiled.

"Well," he said with his familiar dryness, "when the general and I were having our customary chat this morning, I asked him all them things, and he told me—not a blanked thing at all."

"Didn't even say when the smoking was coming up, eh, George?" inquired Jerry Holt, raising his head as far as his stooped shoulders would let him, with a plaintive anxiety in his tones.

"Not a word," said George, and swung viciously the stick he always carried on a march at an empty corned-beef can at his feet.

Walt O'Hara spoke up then from the rear rank.

"I wish you fellows would pipe down," he said petulantly. "Where does all this talk get you? I was having a wonderful dream, and you spoiled it entirely."

"Tell us about it, Walt."

"I've been ordering a meal back in the States—a swell restuarant, with a waiter in monkey-clothes standing over me. —— me, what a meal!"

"Go on; don't stop there. Whatcher have?"

"Oh, I had him bring on a roast duck as an appetizer, and, that out of the way, three of 'em come bearin' a turkey with his legs sticking up—you know—and around him was roasted potatoes all hot and brown. And then, as side-orders was ——"

"Have a heart, Walt. That's enough, that's enough."

But Walt, fairly started, went through the whole menu despite them.

"And there was a barbecued ox for dessert," he ended. "And I smoked a whole box of two-bit cigars."

Just then there was a commotion at the head of the company. The captain, walking with the lieutenant of the first platoon on the flank, had been smoking a cigaret. Whiffs of the flavor had been coming back to the men and exciting in them cravings that they wanted to forget. Now, the cylinder half-consumed, the captain had tossed it into the grass at the side of the road. Instantly three men in the first squad had broken ranks and pounced upon it.

"The first squad has all the luck," Bill Graves muttered to Jerry. "That makes four butts they've had since noon."

"Uh-huh," said Jerry to the road ahead of him. "The first squad gets butts and the second squad gets lip-burners. If they pass us back anything at all, we only scorch our fingers. How'd you like to have just one long, full drag, Bill? What?"

"That's your piece," said Bill. "When I want to hear from you again, I'll call on you."

"Hello," called George Staney. "Here's a halt."

Up ahead the column had stopped its march; the men were breaking ranks, walking off the road and throwing themselves down on the grass. Five minutes rest in every hour was the rule; but hours on the march are very long ones. Now, the gaps in the column having filled, the halt had reached the 79th Company.

"Fall out to the right of the road," came the command.

Bill Graves and Jerry Holt, sitting with their packs propped up against the embankment, for they thought it useless effort to squirm out of a pack merely to put it on again in five minutes, sighed with relief. Walt O'Hara, flat on his back with his pack under his head, grinned up at them.

"Back in your college," he said, "the rah-rah boys are taking two drags on cigarets and heavin' 'em away."

Bill, broad of back and mighty of limb from his football training, grimaced, but said nothing. Jerry, his buddie, an emaciated contrast to his friend, coughed painfully and fumbled in his pockets. He brought out a handful of crumbs.

"I had some pipe tobacco in there once," he murmured, "but it got mixed up with some hardtack I carried there too. Wonder if this would smoke."

He produced a rumpled paper and rolled the mixture painstakingly. He lighted the end, took a tentative mouthful of smoke, and spat.

"Ugh," he said. "Anybody else want a drag?"

They did, but without enthusiasm. Every new smoker had to light the improvised cigaret afresh. Bill glared at the captain, who was pacing up and down the road smoking again with bland unconcern.

"There's something wrong with this Army," Bill stated.

"Uh-huh," yawned Walt. "You ain't general."

"That's grouch Number One, of course," Bill went on. "But aside from that, there's something wrong with an army where the officers have everything and the men nothing. Look at that long, lanky, bloodless imbecile out there in the road. He's had so many now that his mouth tastes like cotton. See there, now."

The captain had thrown the cigaret away. A man scuttled on hands and knees to seize it.

"I'd like to have that captain in my office when I'm sworn out. I'd fine him a dollar a day for smoking."

"Like to punch his face in," said Walt, rolling over with his face to his pack. "I'd do it now if I had half a chance."

George Staney frowned a little.

"I've known the skipper for quite a while," said he slowly. "He's a good soldier and a square man."

"Maybe so, maybe so," said the others, and then fell into an abstracted silence.

"Fall in," came the word down the column.

The men struggled to their feet.

THREE hours later the part of the column where George Staney swung his stick and the other members of the squad stumped along with bowed heads, their hands easing the eternal drag of the pack-straps, had reached a populous town in the valley. A few Germans were ranged along the street, looking on with expressionless faces. The chief activity was among the American troops who had already reached the town and had fallen out of ranks. Some were standing at the doors of houses or leaning out of windows, calling out the usual jests to the men who were passing. Every shop of whatever description was thronged with American customers, eager to spend the pay which had been accumulating so long. A number were washing their feet at the fountain in the square.

"Regimental headquarters," announced George Staney. "The band is billeted over there."

"Small chance for us then," Bill groaned, throwing his pack farther up on his shoulders and almost losing his balance in the process. "We billeted on the main road last night—it's the mountains for us tonight, and no mistake."

Jerry unslung his rifle from his shoulder and began to carry it, muzzle down, in his hand. He coughed.

"Oh, don't be too sure, Bill," said he weakly. "I've got a hunch we'll stay here after all. Lord knows we've had our share of flank marching already."

The others joined in support of him. Up the column, companies were turning off side streets, to be sure; their turn might come any moment. When the company ahead did "squads right" and came to a halt by the side-walk, hopes in the squad were high. Only Bill and George Staney kept their heads down and plodded on stoically.

The company kept on alone. It traversed the main street and turned off to the right. Along a street of square gray residences it passed, the men momentarily expecting and praying for a halt. It was only when the last house was passed and they set their feet on a bridge which spanned the Ahr, that they despaired, cursed deeply, and doggedly set their faces to the road. Fifteen minutes later they were among the hills.

The night was settling down. In the road there was almost complete darkness. The banks on either side and the trees above them shut out from the marching column the little light that was still reflected from the sky. On the uneven road men stumbled; some fell and, hampered by their packs, had to be helped to their feet by men behind. It was easy to stumble then, so weary were the feet that climbed the road and the muscles that drove them on, unsustained as they had been by food since morning. No word was spoken in the ranks; the uneven tramp of feet on the road and the clicks of rifle barrels against buckles were the only sounds.

Then a light gleamed through a tree ahead; some one called his neighbor's attention to it. Every one saw it now, a murmur of voices arose, the column moved more briskly. The road swung round and passed into a little village. As the hobnails began to click on the paved streets, the company was hushed once more in profound expectation. But the straight figure at the head of the column, visible now in the light from house windows, looked neither to right nor left. He marched through, took the road up the hill beyond—and the company followed him. Some one swore—and then again the clicking of rifle barrels and the shuffle, shuffle of feet.

In the darkness, a few moments later, the captain called a halt. As the men fell out blindly to the side of the road and found places to settle themselves against the bank, they could see his cigaret glowing as he paced up and down before them. When he was out of earshot they cursed him and talked among themselves in jerky sentences and grumbling tones. Of the third squad in the first platoon Walt O'Hara alone was in spirits.

"Now if I had obeyed orders like the fine soldier I ain't," said he to the world in general, "my iron rations would be still in my pack where I could eat 'em now. Has anybody got anything at all? I ain't partikeler—a chicken sandwich, or a hunk o' apple pie—anything at all would do."

His tones were humorously plaintive. The corporal alone gave a throaty chuckle; the others were coldly unappreciative. Walt began to whistle a lonesome tune to himself. Somewhat apart from the others Bill and Jerry conversed in whispers.

"I've seen men go absent without leave for less than this," Jerry was saying weakly. "I'm all in, and I tell you I'm going to fall out pretty soon and shift for myself."

"Feel pretty bad, boy?" asked Bill with his hand on his buddie's knee.

"Rotten," answered Jerry shortly. "I can't go on much more."

"Well," said Bill, "you know how I feel about that. It's a sort of principle with me. I've stuck through every drive even with a wound and gas-burns simply because I've seen so blooming many men go back for no reason at all. I hate to admit I'm done for."

He was silent a moment. Then:

"But that's foolish of me, I reckon, Jerry. If you fall out, I'll go with you, of course."

Jerry coughed and said nothing. They watched the captain's cigaret-end pass them and return.

"—— that man," swore Bill softly. "Has he no feeling at all? I'll fall out with you when you say the word, Jerry. Hang the rules and regulations."

"Well, I won't right away, Bill," said Jerry. "I guess I can go on a bit more. There's liable to be another town here pretty soon, and there's a good chance we'll billet there. Let's see, anyway."

"It's up to you, Jerry," Bill replied, and then they fell in at the command, finding their places by instinct in the darkness.

The rest seemed only to have stiffened their muscles and to have made their packs heavier. The mountain road was steeper now, darker and more uneven. They lurched against each other as they walked. Hunger had become a dull ache which sapped their strength continuously. Then, after fifteen minutes' progress, a whisper ran through the ranks and down the files. Wasn't that a light on the trees ahead? Sure enough, and in a moment they had topped a rise and were going down into a valley toward a village.

"My God," said Jerry prayerfully. "We must stop here."

They were on the uneven road again with the paving stones behind them almost before full realization came to them. The man at the head of the column had not hesitated for an instant nor slackened his pace. For a while after the road was dark again the silence was complete, as if every tongue had been paralyzed, but an incoherent babbling of low-voiced talk soon ran up and down the column. Jerry was slow to speak. Then:

"Bill," he groaned. "Why do you suppose we went through that town? There was plenty of room there and not a soldier about."

"Ask the captain—I don't believe —— knows," Bill grunted in reply.

"I'm going to fall out if we don't stop at the next one, Bill."

"I'm with you, Jerry," said Bill. "Want me to help carry your pack? Pass over your gun anyway."

"No, no, Bill—I'm all right."

And they were silent again.

The next village was long in coming. The road had begun to climb again, and the pace was slower. When it came it was unexpected. The road curved sharply around a jutting point and showed the lights of it directly ahead. But the first glance predicted disappointment—too small of course—not room for one platoon. Against the sky they could see only a half-dozen roofs and through the darkness only a few scattered lights. Two of these lights, evidently from open doors, shone straight across the road, crossing it with parallel bars of radiance. In one of the houses a dog was barking. Jerry coughed.

"We're going through, Bill—I know we are. Will you fall out with me?"

"I'm with you, Jerry. Walk over to the flank as soon as we pass the lights. Then make a dive for the ditch. I'll go first—you follow me. We've got to be out of sight before the lieutenant of the second platoon gets up. Are you ready?"

"All right, Bill."

The head of the column had reached the illuminated portion of the road now. They could see the captain striding along a little in advance, his tall straight figure delineated as sharply against the darkness ahead as if a spot-light were turned upon him. In a moment they themselves were in the light, and then out of it again on the outskirts of the village.

"Ready, Jerry?"

"Yes, Bill."

Bill leaped from the road into the ditch, falling on hands and knees into slimy mud. The butt of the rifle slung from his shoulder banged sharply against a stone. He crept behind the bushes which lined the road and lay there breathing in gasps. He felt Jerry at his feet. Beyond the barrier he could hear the feet going by, interminably. Would they never pass? Some one cursed profoundly; an officer called petulantly:

"Close up! Close up!"

Still the feet shuffled on. He could hear the men lurching against each other as they tripped on ruts and stones. At last there were no more behind. A sergeant called to a straggler—

"Shake a leg. Keep in ranks, you!"

The sounds passed on into the darkness, and there was silence—only the barking of a dog in the village and their own breathing in the silence of the night.

FOR a moment the men lay where they were, too exhausted to move and feeling a wonderful content in mere inaction. Then Bill called softly:

"We'd better find a billet and some chow toot sweet, Jerry. It must be getting pretty late."

"All right, Bill. You pick your place."

Bill got to his feet and helped Jerry up. They pushed their way through the bushes, wiped their muddy hands on the grass by the roadside, and began to walk toward the village. One of the lights which had shone on the road was now out, and the house itself was dark; the door of the other house still stood open and brightly illuminated, it served them as a beacon.

"That house seems as good as any," said Bill, tossing his rifle more securely on his shoulder. "What do you say we try it?"

Jerry agreed weakly; he was almost beyond the point of speech now, and he stumbled after his friend blindly. Bill led the way to the house. As he opened the gate, a dog came tearing around the corner of the building, barking furiously. Bill swung his rifle down into his hands, intending to use the butt if there were need, but the dog barked and jumped and crouched ahead of him just out of reach. The light from the door was darkened suddenly by the shape of a man.

"Fritz, Fritz," he called.

The dog ran up the steps and stood before his master, bristling and growling.

"*Wer ist?*" called the man.

Bill knew just enough German for simple purposes.

"*Amerikanische Soldaten,*" he said in explanation. And then, as the most serviceable phrase in his vocabulary: "*Haben Sie etwas zu essen? Wir haben Geld.*"

Silence succeeded for a moment. Bill suddenly was conscious of the rifle in his hands; would the Heinie think he was trying to force an entrance? That would never do. He slung it on to his shoulder quickly and racked his brain for German words which would be appropriate for the occasion. Then the man stepped back a little from the doorway and, to Bill's surprize, spoke in English.

"Come in," he said with just a trace of accent. "I speak American. You are welcome."

Slightly dazed, Bill with Jerry at his heels walked up the steps and entered the room. The dog fawned before them as they passed; Bill stooped to ruffle the hair on his neck. The room before them was small and square; a table covered with a red cloth and bearing a large kerosene lamp filled the center. Around the walls were framed steel engravings of landscapes and tavern scenes.

The German stood by the table now, resting one hand upon it. He was rather a young man, Bill noted, with short, bristling hair and an oval jaw. He wore what Bill knew to be a uniform coat, unbuttoned. His face was expressionless as Bill searched it, seeking for evidence of the sort of reception he might expect. Only the weak blue eyes made Bill uneasy and slightly suspicious; they were never still, furtively glancing now at him and now at Jerry, never meeting his own steadily for an instant.

Bill resolved to keep his rifle where he could reach it instantly if need be, although he felt no actual fear. He spoke now in explanation.

"My company is camped in a field not far from here," said he, for caution's sake providing himself with imaginary support. "We have marched far and are tired. If you can provide us with food and lodging, we are able to pay you your price."

"It can be arranged," said the German formally, never changing his position. "Will you be seated?"

They dropped into chairs at the invitation. Bill unslung his rifle and leaned it against the arm of his chair where his hand could close over it easily at a suspicious move. Jerry slumped down into a deeply upholstered rocker and lounged there lifelessly.

"It is a surprize to hear English spoken," said Jerry by way of conversation. Why did the Heinie stand there so rigidly? "Have you been in England?"

"In America," answered the German. "I have lived ten years in Idaho. I have come back when my country called. But you are hungry, is it not? I will get you something to eat."

He looked at Bill very steadily now for a perceptible instant; then turned abruptly and left the room.

Bill thought rapidly and kept his eye steadily on the door while the German was gone. Was he going to start something? Two against one; but Jerry wouldn't be much help in his present condition. He had murmured, "*Bon billet,*" to Bill, smiled wanly and, turning his head to the back of his chair, was almost asleep. Bill felt a trifle uneasy—not afraid, for he was confident in his ability to outwit and outfight ten Germans with a fair chance—but he kept his wits alert and his hand where it could reach the rifle at his side. He felt like an actor in a melodrama and experienced the thrill of holding the front of the stage. He rather hoped the villain would play up to him. But when the German reentered, he bore a plate of black bread and one of cheese in his hands, pacifically enough.

"*Brot und fromage,*" said Bill genially, as his host set them on the table.

"Yes," the German replied in an expressionless tone, and went out of the room again.

He returned with a pot of corn coffee.

"Eat," said he.

Bill pulled his chair, rifle and all, to the table and spread cheese on a slice of bread.

"Food, Jerry," he called. "Come on, boy."

Jerry roused himself and wearily dragged his body to another chair by the table. For a while the boys ate silently, slice after slice of bread covered with thick layers of white cheese, cup after cup of the steaming liquid which Germans called coffee. They were blissfully happy. While they ate, their host stood against the frame of the door which led to the kitchen, his arms folded on his chest, his eyes never taking themselves from them. Bill felt uneasy under the gaze, but went on eating with a show of unconcern.

At length the German left his station and came forward until he stood above them, looking squarely at Bill. The boys stopped eating and looked up at him. He spoke, his voice hard, but breaking at the end of the sentence with the stress of ill-controled excitement.

"You are deserters," he said.

Bill winced at the word and began to expostulate.

"No, no," he began.

"Don't fool me" the German interrupted sharply. "I know. Your company is not camped in the field—it went on. It is far away now, and you have no wish to join it. You are sick of the army; you want to boss yourself. You want to eat and sleep. You hate it all, do you not? No, no—" as Jerry began to speak—"Don't fool me. I know. I have lived in Idaho where there are soldiers. They grow tired of the Army there also and go up to the mines. I have talked with them. The officers, they say—they are brutes. The Army is the life of a dog. You think so too, is it not? And you leave."

HE WAS leaning forward toward them now, knuckles resting on the table, his voice eager, his words coming fast. When he had finished, Bill leaned back in his chair, fragmentary thoughts and pictures tearing painfully through his weary brain. Were they deserters, then? Reasons enough, surely. He thought with great waves of self-pity about the inadequate rations, the senseless night hikes, the guard duty which kept them from sleep when they needed it so sorely, the constant demand that they keep their appearance soldierly no matter under what impossible conditions, the unsympathetic attitude of the officers who had everything that the men lacked, the injustice of sending men directly from the front on this grueling march, the absence of everything which could bring happiness—even tobacco.

Then he reviewed, with growing anger, the events of the night. And above all, the figure of his captain came time and time again on the screen of his mind—that cold, hard, unbending man who represented in his person all the hateful tyranny of the system, that system which seemed always standing above him with its hands on his head, pushing him down, down into mire. Through his tired brain all these thoughts flashed, and stirred him into violent discontent. He stared hard at the table before him.

"Yes," he said slowly. "It's a dog's life—isn't it, Jerry?"

He looked up quickly for support. Jerry's head went down into his arms on the table.

"You're right," he murmured.

The German's voice was filled with tenderest sympathy when he replied. He laid a hand on Jerry's shoulder.

"Poor boy," he said. "He is very tired. It is the worst of all lives, I know—I too have been there. The private soldier is nothing—the War is everything—the War and the personal glory of the officers. But they take care of their own comfort, do they not? When the men starve, they eat in plenty."

"And smoke too," broke in Bill angrily. "My ——, we haven't smoked for two weeks now."

"Nor I, for longer than that," smiled the German. "But you need it more than I. I know exactly how it is. And your officers, do you love them?"

His voice trembled a little as he spoke. He leaned towards Bill where he sat glowering at the ceiling.

"You love your captain now—yes?"

"—— him!" Bill cried.

"Ah, you do not love him. I thought as much."

He stood up straight now, his face smiling a little in the illumination from the lamp.

"I have seen him. I watched him from the window as he went by at the head of his men. He is straight, and tall—and cruel, is it not?"

"No heart in him," said Bill. "No heart at all."

"Ah yes," the German went on. "He looked like that as I saw him tonight. Only a flash as he went through the light, but one flash was enough. Come, I will tell you a secret. I saw him tonight—yes. But I have seen him before."

He paused dramatically; and then, drawing a chair up to the table, he sat down between the boys. Bill stared at him in fascination; Jerry turned his head on his arms to look at him too. He leaned forward, gripping his chair-arms, and launched into his story.

"I had a brother once—yes. He stayed in Deutschland here while I went across the seas. I loved that boy—I planned to send for him when I had made the fortune. I lived in Idaho ten years and learned to love your America. Then came the War. The Fatherland called. I came, and my brother and I joined our regiment. Three years, almost four, went by. I was wounded twice, but my brother never—he was always at the front. I joined him there just before we made our great march on Paris. You know how we sweep down—nothing could stop us. But we suffered much in marching and by the shells, just the same.

"Then we came to the woods of Belleau—I and my brother with our regiment in the front line. There the fighting was bad, very bad. We were forced to go back a little. Those men—they were devils! No sense—they would run forward until they were killed—and we could not kill them all. At last we got in very tight place—our own barbed-wire behind us through which we could not go. The Americans were right upon us. Some of us run back to a trench we know, which had communication with the next line. But, before I could stop him, my brother and six others dived into a dug-out—what they think of, I do not know.

"And then came running a line of Americans, a tall, straight man in front. He shouted much and waved his gun. Just as I came to a low place in the trench where I could see, he run to the dug-out where my brother lay, called 'Hey, you Heinies, come out,' and without waiting an instant threw in two grenades. Oh, *mein Gott*, I hear the explosion as I run. Rocks and pieces of flesh rained down in the trench—my own brother's flesh! Oh, *mein Gott*, *mein Gott*, there was nothing, nothing I could do."

And the German sank his head and sobbed.

Jerry breathed out a startled little exclamation; Bill sank silently back in his chair. A sort of maudlin horror gripped him. This side of the war had never come so vividly to him before. On the lines the Germans were enemies to be shot at whenever a chance came, to be shelled, to be cursed. But, God, the Germans were human beings, weren't they? And their back-home was just as real to them as his was to him—and their friends and family thought just as much of 'em.

No wonder the old boy hated the captain; why, he hated him himself! No real soldier would kill men that way, without giving 'em a chance. It was brutal, horrible. The captain wasn't a man; he was a fiend incarnate. He'd had proof enough of that himself—those marches, that guard duty, that everlasting don't-care air of his and—maybe this was a small matter, but it was a good evidence of the man's spirit—those cigarets he smoked so unconcernedly before men who were dying for just one little drag. —— him! —— him!

The German's sobs had been few and racking; now he had controlled himself again and was staring at Bill, his gaze fixed and questioning.

"You see," said he. "You see why I hate your captain. Do you blame me?"

"No," answered Bill sharply, leaning forward on the table. "I can see your point of view exactly. In your place I'd feel the same way. And maybe I do feel something that way myself. The War's over now. Let a man be judged as a man and not as an officer. I say he murdered your brother, and I'll say too that he's —— near murdered some of his own men. Look at my buddie, Jerry, there now."

Jerry was almost asleep. He stirred himself at the sound of his name, looked up, coughed and smiled wanly:

"Oh, no, Bill. I'm alive enough. I'm just so gosh-awful sleepy."

His head went down again. The German reached over to pat his shoulder.

"Poor boy, poor boy," he said with deep tenderness. "We'll put him to bed in just a moment. Just this I want to say to you first, sir."

He turned to Bill.

"Yes, say it."

"When I knew that my brother was killed," the German went on, an awful seriousness in his voice, "there was born in me a great resolve. I would find the man who did it. Tonight God or Fate, what you will, has shown me him. Now another resolve comes to me. I will avenge my brother's death."

He was perfectly calm, but his eyes were very bright. Bill stared at him fascinated. The German leaned across and held up a finger.

"You too hate my enemy. We have a common purpose. Let us act together."

Bill jumped to his feet in horror. He mouthed an angry negative, but the turmoil of thoughts within him choked it back. Surely he had no cause to be angry or insulted; couldn't he see the German's way of looking at it well enough? Of course he could. He didn't blame him. But for an American soldier to be in league with a Heinie against one of his own officers, that was another matter.

"Oh, no, no. You don't understand," he cried. "I don't like the captain any better than you, but I can't do anything, you know!"

The German was standing now, and looking at him. To Bill's surprize he smiled and extended his hand.

"I don't want you to do anything tonight," he said, "except to occupy the very nice bed I shall prepare for you and your friend here, poor boy. We may talk more of this in the morning. But at least, you will keep my secret?"

"Surest thing you know," Bill promised, vastly relieved that he had not been pressed further. "And I'm mighty sorry for you."

"And I thank your kind heart," said the German, pressing his hand again.

Then he turned abruptly and left the room.

TWENTY minutes later Bill and Jerry were side by side between soft sheets, curiously soft sheets which breathed out a faint fragrance of lavender. Above them were heavy blankets making a cozy barrier against the cold, and under them a feather-bed, into which their tired bodies sank in a comfort which they had forgotten was possible. Jerry nestled into his pillow with a little sigh of complete happiness, which nevertheless caught and trembled as he breathed it. Bill lay staring open-eyed at the ceiling. He wanted to think and to talk.

"Jerry, are you awake?"

"Yes, Bill."

"Did you hear what the Heinie said?"

"Part of it," answered Jerry. "He had a hard time, didn't he?"

"Awful," Bill groaned. "Just think of having your brother blown up almost before your eyes! Why, Jerry, that wasn't fair fighting—the captain didn't give him a chance, any chance at all to surrender. That man has no soul."

"You don't like him, do you, Bill?"

"No, —— him. Do you?"

He broke off and swore again.

"—— it all, Jerry, I wish I had a smoke. I want to think and I can't. My brain just whirls round and round."

He lay staring at the darkness again for a moment, all the German had said repeating itself endlessly in his thoughts. He turned to ask Jerry if he had heard what the Heinie had proposed to him, but the boy was asleep now, breathing with little groans deep in his throat. Bill rolled over on his side and tried to force himself to slumber. Just as consciousness began to fade, a frightful picture of a hand-grenade explosion which scattered dirt and the mangled bodies of men came to him, and he started broad awake.

Again he began to drift off; this time it was the figure of a tall, stern man marching endlessly ahead of him up the side of a mountain, smoking cigaret after cigaret without a backward glance, that drove him back to wakefulness. But at last, through sheer weariness, he fell asleep.

When he awoke in the morning, it was very light. The first thought that crossed his mind was that he must be on his way at once in order that he might join the company before the march began. He sprang from the bed and began hurriedly tumbling into his uniform.

"Jerry, Jerry," he called.

The head on the pillow did not stir. Well, let him sleep a bit more; he would wash and see if some breakfast was forthcoming. His shoes on and his leggings rolled, he opened the door of the room and looked out. His host was arranging plates on the table.

"Some breakfast for us?" called Bill cheerily.

The German turned and waved.

"Good morning," he greeted. "Was the sleep well? Yes, such poor breakfast as a bachelor may prepare I make ready. And your friend, how is he this morning?"

"Still asleep," Bill replied. "I'll roll him out."

He returned to Jerry's side and called to him again. The boy in the bed showed no signs of life. Vaguely frightened, Bill took his buddie by the shoulder, turned him on his back, and shook him.

"Jerry, Jerry," he called. "It's late. We must hurry."

Jerry's eyes opened slowly. He blinked. His face was flushed and his eyes glassy. Then a little smile came to his mouth.

"Mother," he whispered. "I'm tired, Mother. Let me sleep just a little more."

His eyes closed wearily, and he turned his face into the pillow.

Bill stared at him in horror. Then he sprang out into the next room.

"Something's wrong with Jerry," he cried. "I wish you'd come in and see. I believe he's sick."

The German hurriedly set the coffee-pot he was carrying down on the table and walked quickly into the bed-room. He put his hand on Jerry's forehead and felt under the bed-clothes for his wrist. For a moment he stood feeling the pulse, while Bill looked at him with anxious eyes and aching heart. Then:

"*Mein Gott*, it is a fever."

"Will he—will he die?"

The German shook his head a little helplessly. He put his hand on Jerry's flushed brow again and, forcing open his lids, looked into his eyes.

"I can not tell," said he, straightening up. "He is very sick, I know. But the disease, that is beyond me. I am no doctor."

"We must find one," cried Bill. "Is there one in the village? Run for him; get him."

The man shook his head again slowly.

"*Nein*," said he. "There is no doctor here. The old one was killed at Verdun, and no new one has come."

Bill felt unreasonable anger surging through him at the man's helplessness.

"What shall we do?" Bill cried fiercely. "Don't stand there gawking."

"But, my dear young friend——"

"I'll find something to do," said Bill, striding into the next room. "We must get a doctor here quick. I'm going to find my company as quick as I can, and get an ambulance here."

He slung on his pack quickly, pushed on his overseas cap, and picked up his rifle.

"You'll take good care of my friend while I'm gone, won't you?" he said to the German pleadingly. "You'll do all you can for him until I can help him?"

"Most surely," said the other, walking to him and grasping his hand. "I shall do all things for his comfort that I know. You can trust me, believe me. And this matter we spoke about last night——"

"No time for that now," cried Bill. "But just remember that if Jerry dies," he choked a little over the words, "I know the brute who killed him. Goodby."

"We will meet again," he heard the German calling behind him as he ran down the steps and slammed the gate.

FOR the beauties of sweeping mountainside brilliant with late Autumn coloring and the eternal green of spruces, or of meadow-land to which the morning frost still clung, Bill had little care; but he did note subconsciously, as between walking and running he left the village increasingly far behind him, the general lay of the land.

Where he had fallen out the night before had been the summit of the pass; now the road was crossing a bit of high tableland, overlooked behind by hills, and falling away some distance ahead of him into what seemed to be a broad and deep valley. For more hills, blue in the distance, rose beyond. He wondered vaguely whether in that valley flowed the Rhine. His attention, however, was principally directed towards a group of house-roofs he could make out through the trees which surrounded them, grouped together at the farther edge of the plateau.

That must be the next village on the road, and there, unless the company had passed through this village also, he would come up with them. Or had they started on already? There was at least a chance that he could catch them. He increased his pace even more at the thought.

As he hurried on, his conscious thoughts were all of Jerry, of his chances for recovery, of the need of haste that he might have speedy care. But ever in the background of his mind rankled a hatred against the system which had driven the boy on until he dropped from exhaustion and had not the strength nor will to resist the coming of disease. He could stand hardships himself, but Jerry—he was different.

And it was all so needless! Why couldn't food be provided, and why were marches so cruelly long? And as the representative of all that was wrong with Bill's universe the figure of the captain flitted before his eyes. He could kill that man, he thought.

Now he could make out the village more clearly. It was quite large—a tall church spire surmounted by a gilded cross marked the limits in one direction, and houses straggled down to farmlands in the other. A rise of ground ahead hid the main part of the village so that he strained his eyes in vain for a sight of unusual activity on the streets or for the olive drab of uniforms. The road dipped sharply; he could see only the gilded cross above the hill ahead. He climbed the hill feverishly. Once on top, the village was very close.

Yes, this was the place, and he was in time. The column was forming in the main street, roll was being called. He could see glimpses of the ranks between the houses and hear the men answering to their names. Then as he reached the first gray buildings and ran down a side street, a sharp command or two rang out, the two ranks swung into squad formation, and the column began to move out of the village and down the hill. He rushed out into the main street a rod behind the end of the line.

Just as he began to run after them, his mind and eyes intent on finding a hospital apprentice or a doctor to whom he could communicate his news, a tall, straight figure in neat serge, a Sam-Browne belt strapped around shoulder and waist, stepped from an open doorway right in Bill's path. He stopped dead in consternation and, from instinct, saluted. The captain stopped too, returned the salute quizzically and surveyed Bill calmly from head to foot.

"Well," said he. "Having a little vacation?"

"No, sir—yes, sir," stammered Bill. "You see, it's this way, sir——"

"That will do," said the captain. "You will fall in with the prisoners under guard at the end of the column."

He turned sharply and made after his men.

"But, sir," cried Bill, running after him, sudden horror making him almost calm, "my buddie's sick back there in the next village—terribly sick—and I came after the doctor. Give me a chance to help him."

"I said, that will do," returned the captain with a frown. "Come with me."

Dazed almost beyond the point of indignation, Bill followed at his captain's heels as he, with swift strides, caught up with the marching men. At the rear shuffled along three men by themselves, the scapegoats of the company, drunk on guard or absent without leave as a matter of principle most of the time; behind them were two men with pistols in their belts mounting guard over them. To the guards as he came abreast them the captain said curtly—

"Here's another for you."

And then without a glance at Bill he strode rapidly forward toward the head of the column. Dumbly Bill fell in with the others, paying no attention to the guards' pleasantries or his companions' curiosity, and trudged along silently, his eyes fixed on the ground and on the plodding feet ahead.

As the day wore on the road they were following circled down the mountain, from which faintly in the distance the blue waters of a river could be descried, and joined a great highway at the bottom. Ahead and behind as far as could be seen were the ranks of the advancing Army. To any one else than Bill, a subtle difference in the spirit of the men would have been apparent; even he started a little and wondered when from far up the column the sound of men singing came back to him—an old barracks song such as he had not heard on the march before since that grim morning before Saint-Mihiel, when he had joined the division.

" 'Tain't those socks of sister's that raise the blooming blisters," they were singing: "it's the last long mile."

Soon other companies caught it up, and all that day somewhere within hearing up and down the line there was song. Men were talking too, and laughing sometimes; very often a man in the ranks ahead would lift up his head and peer across the flat grassy land to the left. For over there, just out of sight from the road where they marched, was the Rhine! And when the Rhine was reached, the hike would be over.

Very often in the lines when, after a weary, nerve-testing day of advance through whining shells and whistling machine-gun fire, Bill with his squad-mates had lain in their fox-holes talking in undertones to the music of "sea-bags" whirring overhead, he had tried to foretell his emotion when the Germans had been driven back and he had come with a victorious army to the Rhine. He winced a little as the memory came to him now.

Let them sing, the fools, he thought resentfully. They could forget, perhaps, the trials of the march, the hunger, the overwhelming fatigue, the injustice; but he could not forget. Probably they would obey orders from their slave-drivers just as they had always habitually done, and call their officers, when their commands were snappy and their military deportment correct, "good soldiers."

He could see beyond that—there was no right nor justice in the system. Who were these men that they had the power of life and death over him—the power to keep him even from saving his friend? He thought of Jerry and choked. There was one officer who should suffer for this. He could not tell how, but if an opportunity should come, he would act. Patience, patience—bide his time—but act when the chance came.

Wild insubordination rankled in his heart; every foot pounding down on the firm highway was a hammer forging his resolve. And when a halt was called, he sat by himself on the bank, his head between his arms on his knees, and brooded, brooded.

Now, as the column advanced, the hills began to close in from the right to meet the hills on the left in a blue V ahead. As the afternoon grew late the grassy land became narrower, and flashes of sunlit water were visible from the road. And when the sun was a hand's breadth above the hills, the column reached a point where the Rhine eddied and boiled at their feet, while precipitously on either side the mountains towered, vineyards clinging to their sides and ruined castles completing rugged peaks.

Every few kilometers a valley would appear, opening up into the hills at the right and affording room along the highway for the gray houses and cobbled streets of a village. There the regiments and companies ahead were already quartered; every new village encountered decreased the length of the column.

The singing grew more common now, and in the ranks were gaily flung jests and repartee. Men were swinging along on the wide smooth road as if a band were playing before them. The hike was almost over. This was the Rhine. But Bill cursed them, and thought his own thoughts till the words of his resolve sang themselves eternally in his mind.

The dusk was settling over the river and shrouding its upper reaches when the 79th Company turned abruptly in its march through a village and halted, with a banging of gun-butts, in a side street. The billeting party, which had been in the town sinc early afternoon, took charge and apportioned the men to their quarters. They went gaily, and, once rid of pack and rifle in the barn or house where they were to sleep that night, sallied out in search of adventures or, more commonly, food.

Bill, however, with his fellow-prisoners, was left standing in the street under guard, listlessly watching the men go by in groups of two or three laughing and talking. He thought with a little pang of the third squad, wondered where they were and what they were doing. Out foraging, most likely, and not in town, for it was always the squad's custom to seek some house on the outskirts where no soldiers were billeted—there they were more likely to find a real meal.

As he glanced toward the mountain he saw four or five men climbing toward a solitary house near a vineyard—he wondered if that were the gang. They would miss him and Jerry. Jerry! He became alert with a throb of his heart. He had been a fool. What if the captain were a brute—perhaps he himself could do something for Jerry unofficially. The boy couldn't be left to die.

In a sudden frenzy Bill turned to the nearest guard.

"Say, brother," he whispered, "I want you to do something for me. I left my buddie sick in a village up the mountain—the place just back from where you billeted last night. Can't you get an ambulance-driver or somebody so that he can be got out of there?"

"Sure," said the guard, with a furtive glance around to see if he were watched. "Just as soon as I'm off duty—and that ought to be right soon—I'll do what I can for you. Say, that's tough! Is he very sick?"

"I'm afraid so," said Bill, and was silent again, for the billeting officer was approaching.

Well, he had done what he could.

AN HOUR later Bill, his pack off and his rifle taken from him, was lying on a thin layer of straw spread on the floor of a dark and odorous cow-barn. The guard had been changed—the man he had spoken to had winked at him as he went out and had nodded his head. Pretty decent sort, that fellow—must be an old-timer to act so willingly without asking questions.

Now there was nothing to do except to lie there and think. Think? Well, he had plenty to think about. And all Bill's thoughts, as he lay staring into the darkness and at a star which blinked faintly through a hole in the roof, centered around Jerry, the captain—and the German of the night before, who had said that they would meet again. He'd have a better answer this time, Bill thought. ——, he wished he could get out of that place—have an hour of liberty—just one hour. It was awful to lie there not being able to do anything. How he wished he could smoke! That would help him plan.

Just then an oblong of dim light fell across the floor at Bill's side. He turned on an elbow and saw that a sentry was standing in the open doorway.

"Private Graves?" said the sentry.

"Yes," answered Bill. "What's the matter now?"

"Captain wants to see you," was the surprizing reply. "Headquarters is four blocks down this side of the street—on the farther corner. Come here, buddie, and I'll show you the place. Captain says you're to come without guard."

Bill slowly pulled himself to his feet and sullenly walked to the door. What now? he wondered. He wasn't to be left alone for a minute, it seemed, but was to be hounded and driven till he dropped. Probably this was a summary court-martial—fine time of night to be having it! The captain evidently couldn't bear to have him get a good night's sleep, but having once got something on him would pile punishment on punishment as long as he had a chance. And sending him without guard—that was probably a ruse to see if he would desert again. Well, he'd go and have it out with the captain. As well now as later. In his resentment he hardly heard the sentry's directions.

"There," that obliging Marine ended, "you can find it now. And say, brother, ain't it the fine night? This is God's country up here, and no mistake. And say, ain't you glad that —— hike's over? Durham ought to be coming up pretty soon."

"Uh," Bill grunted and flung himself away.

That sentry sounded as if he were just out of recruit camp, jabbering away about nothing at all. What had got into him? What had got into everybody? Usually at this time of night the men had their bunks made down and were already sleeping, or lying on their backs discussing the first things they should buy when they got back home. Tonight, however, many were on the streets. Two men passed him on the narrow sidewalk, laughing at a joke just told. Bill glared at them as if they had been laughing at him. One man leaned half out of a window opposite and howled down at them—

"Where yer going, you guys?"

"Come along. We're going down to drink the Rhine dry," was the cryptic reply.

And then, up the street behind him, a group around a door-step were improvizing on a well-known song:

"The hike is over, the hike is over,
And we're going over, 'cause it's over over here."

THEIR voices came down mellowed into sweetness by the soft air, but to Bill the words were discord. "Over," was it? Not for him.

He began to plan in his mind what he should say to the captain. If this were a summary court he would have a chance to speak. And speak he would, he bet the world. And act too, if he had half a chance. They might as well get him for assaulting an officer as for anything else. Just one good swing—here Bill felt his knuckles tighten—and a few scores at least would be settled. But at this point he came face to face with a man going in the opposite direction. It was George Staney.

"Why, Bill," exclaimed the corporal. "Where've you been all this day?"

"Under guard," answered Bill with the force of an oath. "Jerry was all in last night, and we fell out together just before you billeted."

"Where's Jerry now?"

"He's sick, —— sick," Bill cried. "I left him up in the hills. And when I came down this morning, ran most of the way, to get help, the captain wouldn't let me say a word. He put me under guard—put me under guard, I tell you, and Jerry may be up there dying. And now he wants me," he added bitterly. "Summary court, most likely. I tell you, George, I'm going to break loose on him and speak my mind. I'll hit him too, if I get a chance. He's got it coming. He's a brute."

The corporal grinned.

"That's the spirit," he said. "But don't be too hasty, Bill. It's funny about him and Jerry, but I figure he knows what he is doing. I've known the captain for a long time. He's square. He's a hard man, but he's square."

"Listen here, George," Bill broke in. "You don't know him then. I heard a story about him last night that will make your blood run cold——"

And throwing off all caution, Bill breathlessly plunged into the story the German had told him, and ended:

"No square man would do a thing like that—no man with half a heart would do it. The German is going to get the captain and, by all that's holy, I'm going to help him—if I only get a chance."

George looked at him very quietly.

"I'd ought to laugh at you, Bill," he said at last. "You are a bit funny, but I'm not going to. Maybe I've forgotten how to laugh after being with the outfit since before Belleau. If you'd been in that long maybe you'd know a lot of things you don't know now. If the skipper kept you from helping Jerry, you've got a kick coming. But if you've taken it into your head to help all the Germans that lost brothers in this War, you've got your hands —— full"

"But," broke in Bill, "this is different. If you could have heard him, George, you wouldn't talk like that. It was all so cold-blooded and——"

"Cold-blooded," George echoed. "Everything was cold-blooded in this war. Sherman went through an easier one, and he said a mouthful about it. Listen, son, I was right behind the skipper on that day you've been talking about. In fact, I tossed in one of them grenades myself."

"You?" cried Bill.

"Yes, me. Now I'm a brute, I suppose. But, as I figure it, Bill, that's war. You've been putting yourself in the German's place and seeing things as he told you about 'em. Now put yourself in our places a while. After you got into the lines things was different—go through machine-gun fire alive and the War was won. But then it was give-and-take, hand-to-hand work with your blood running high and you seeing red every minute. When all this happened you've been telling me about, that bunch of Heinies was sniping at us from the flank, lying behind entrenchments and potting us off one by one as you would wooden ducks in a shooting-gallery. They got my buddy right by my side."

George stopped a minute, while Bill waited breathlessly. George went on again with a steady voice:

"Finally the captain yells, 'Come on, boys, let's root 'em out o' there,' and we made a dive for their trenches, laying down a barrage of rifle-grenades ahead of us. They swarmed out over the rear parapet like rats out of a hole—we after them, hurdling the trench. When that gang took cover in the dug-out they wasn't so foolish as you tell, not by a damn sight. For they had a Maxim in there, brother—I saw the ugly muzzle of it swinging into line. If we had been about one second slower they'd 'a' mowed us down like so much ripe wheat—and then the crape would 'a' been hung on the other side of the Atlantic. Do you see?"

"Yes," answered Bill slowly. "But——"

"Oh, yes," George interrupted, "you go along and hold your little grudge, I won't interfere. Be a *Danny Deever* and knock the captain down. And say, it's a fine night for a hanging."

And with that, George Staney brought his hand down on Bill's back with the throaty chuckle from gas-riddled lungs that was his nearest approach to a laugh, and departed.

Bill was in a sad quandary as he faced up the street once more. He stuck his hands in his breeches pockets and hung his head down as he walked, trying to think. Consequently he almost bumped into a group of men gathered about two plump German girls on the corner. Bill stopped a minute to listen. One of the men, a lanky corporal with an infectious Southern drawl, was explaining at great length to the grinning *fräuleins* who understood not a word:

"Now, we're all fine men that you'd be proud to have for husbands. The hike is over now—you compree hike? Well, it's over anyway—and we-all are going to settle down and take a lo-o-ong rest. A long, long rest, eh, maties?"

"You said it," they cried, and yelled.

As Bill went on the thought that the hike was over began to creep into his mind more and more. Was that what everybody was so happy about? But he had hardly more than crossed the street when a whispered voice, issuing from a dark doorway, called to him.

"Bill, Bill Graves, you old deserter. Come here."

He went toward the voice—it sounded like Walt O'Hara's. By jinks, it was. Walt's air was tremendously secretive. He was hugging an oblong box to his blouse.

"Say, Bill, don't tell a soul, but a mule-skinner friend of mine—an old buddie back in the Eighth at Galveston—has just come up from the S. O. S. with an ammunition train. He brung me these."

And Walt tipped up one end of the cover on his box and gingerly extracted a package.

"What in—not cigarets, Walt! By all that's holy!"

"The same, the same," gurgled Walt gleefully. "A whole carton. That's pretty near two packs apiece for the squad. But you only get one now, Bill, and for the love o' Mike, make 'em last."

"Oh, Walt, you old idiot, you blooming hero."

Bill tore open the package with trembling fingers.

"Got a match, Walt? I can't wait."

And when Walt had brought forth a match, with a grumbled "Got the habit anyway, ain't you?" and an anxious, "For Pete's sake, camouflage that light—we don't want a gang around," Bill was breathing in great glorious clouds of smoke, holding them lingeringly in mouth and lungs, letting them out slowly and dreamily.

"Oh, Walt, isn't this heaven?"

He held up the cylinder with its glowing end against the dark hills behind the town. He set it between his lips again and blew out a cloud of slowly curling smoke against the sky. The moon was just rising between a cleft in the mountain; its first beams lighted up the tower above them and made it something unearthly, something belonging to stories of long ago. Everything that was harsh and cruel in the world faded suddenly out of Bill's memory. He knew only that the world was very beautiful.

"Look at that old tower, Walt. Isn't that wonderful? Say, look up the river there. Did you ever see anything like that?"

Through a valley up above them the moon was shining on the water. The waves and current caught the light, broke it up into shimmering fragments, and cast them sparkling against the darkness beyond. Bill gasped.

"Gosh," said Walt reverently. "It reminds me of the Wabash, Bill. Ever seen it? Oh, that's a river, now."

Bill suddenly remembered the captain, and broke away.

"You know I thank you, Walt. You're a good boy. But I've got to go. See you later, Walt."

He began to walk rapidly toward headquarters, still drawing on his cigaret. It was almost gone. He lighted another from the end as he walked. His feet came to the stone step before the captain's door all too soon. Absent-mindedly he tossed the half-smoked cylinder away; but then, because he remembered Walt's warning to "make 'em last," he crossed quickly to the ditch, rescued it, knocked off the lighted end on his boot, and put the stub carefully in his blouse pocket. Then he buttoned the flap and straightened his collar, pulled off his cap and knocked at the door. At the "Come in," he entered and stood at attention just inside.

THE top-sergeant was stationed at a desk by the door, his feet up at a comfortable angle and his head tipped back in a laugh. Three or four lieutenants, lounging on chairs and on window-sills, were laughing too. The captain had evidently made a joke. He was sitting astride a chair, holding the back with his hands as if he were riding an unruly horse. His cap was lying on the great square table at his side, his hair was rumpled, and his face in the lamplight, despite the tired lines, was merry and boyish.

"And so," he was adding amid the laughter as Bill came in, "the colonel said to the major, 'The hike is over now. You can parade all you —— please but I'm going to do bunk-parade for the next month in the first castle I come to. I've had enough riding to last me a lifetime.' "

"Bless his fat heart," said a lieutenant. "You bet he has."

And they all laughed again.

Then the captain glanced up and saw Bill. His face grew sober.

"Well?" said he.

"Private Graves, sir," Bill answered, his heart pounding a little. "The captain wanted to see me."

"Oh, yes," said the captain. "You are a friend of Private Jerry Holt's?"

"He's my buddie," said Bill simply, but in great wonderment.

"I've just had word from him," the captain went on. "Thought you'd like to know. The ambulance picked him up this morning—just in time, too. The German there was about to give him a hot bath that would have finished him entirely. Now he's in improvised hospital quarters down the Rhine aways. Getting along fine. That's all."

The captain turned his chair about and sat down at the table. But Bill, his emotions too strong for him, threw regulations to the winds.

"How did you know where he was, sir?"

The captain looked up quizzically.

"You told me, young man."

"And by the way," he added, "this letting you off from desertion charges is unofficial, do you see? Don't shoot off your mouth about it. That's all. Get along. Want a cigaret?"

In absolute amazement Bill saw a package being held out to him. He swallowed hard. Then—

"Got some, sir," he said joyfully, turned on his heel, and departed.

As he pulled on his cap outside, all he could think of was how he had misjudged the captain. Why, all he had ever seen of him before was when he was marching along at the head of the company—gosh, now that he thought of it, that must have been as hard on the captain as on him. And the orders—of course those didn't come from the captain—he was obeying orders just the same as the men. And what a human chap he was when you knew him as man to man—offering him a cigaret, now—did anybody ever hear the like of that? He was starting happily up the street, reaching in his pocket for his half-smoked butt, when suddenly——

What was that moving in the darkness by the headquarters' wall? That didn't look right. Bill crossed the street leisurely, turned down the dark side street and then, some yards in the gloom, tiptoed across again. Against the window through which shone the light from the captain's lamp he could see plainly the head of a man. It rose gradually until a pair of shoulders came into view. The head was familiar in some way—long and topped with short bristling hair. As it turned furtively, Bill could see an oval chin. The German! What was he doing here? With sudden horror Bill remembered the resolve. The captain was in danger.

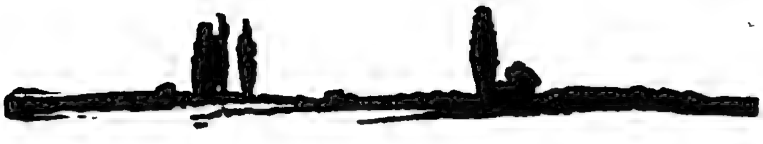
As swiftly as he could, but with prodigious caution, Bill crept up behind. The light glinted now on a pistol barrel which the man was raising toward the glass. Just as it was shoulder-high, Bill gave a sudden leap. Startled, the German turned half-around. Bill grasped the pistol first and then pinioned the other arm. With a sudden wrench, he made the weapon his, clubbed it and brought it down on the German's head. The body wilted and crumpled into his arms.

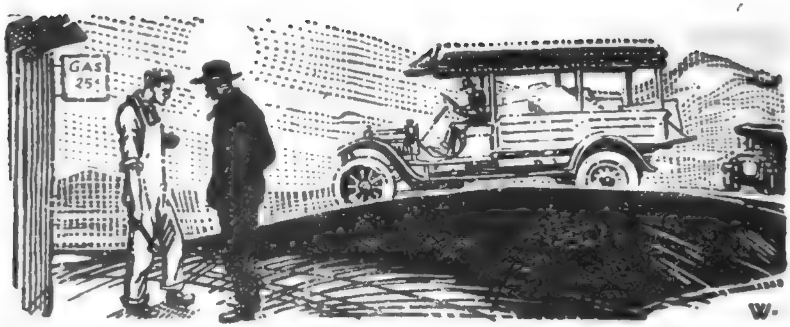
With an emotion strangely like remorse, Bill lifted and carried the limp body across the street. Against the opposite wall he set it, and felt for the wound he had made. Blood, but the skull seemed all right. Poor old fellow, in his place maybe he would have done the same thing. Oh, this War, it was cruelly hard on everybody—but make the best of it, that was all there was to do. The German stirred a little and moaned. He was coming to, Bill realized. What should he do and what should he say? He was still undecided when the German moved weakly, put his hand to his head and murmured—

"Where am I?"

"You're in a —— good world, old man," said Bill from the depths of his heart; and then, because in some way he wanted to even matters, he plunged his hand in his pocket and pulled out a package.

"Have a cigaret," he said.





SERVICE TROUBLE AT TALKING CROW

by Raymond S. Spears

Author of "Through Fire," "Fretful Muncher," etc.

THE Special Agent of the Fadeaway Motor Company received a letter from the Service Head at the home office:

> DEAR ATKIN:—
>
> Please run down to Talking Crow, on the Trail of Many Blossoms. Only one garage there, good business, and present agent James Kalens. Reports from tourists and local owners complain of unfairness, insults, poor work. Agents resign as Kalens wants to, precipitately. Take garage over, be the owner and establish on sound basis. Yours,
>
> WATSON.
>
> P. S. Gumbo fender fine!

Special Agent Jerry Atkin opened his sectionized map of trails and at last located "Trail of Many Blossoms," whose name he jeered. Starting at the Oil Creek Fields, it crossed wide spaces of paper, intersecting many trails, followed the Rio Grande and at last traversed the Kioka Reservation, skirted Mesa Candelaria and joined the Sea-to-Sea.

Atkin sighed. Four years previous he was happy, undisturbed, efficient in the Fadeaway shops. Now he longed for peace by himself in some little garage where he could live and be his own boss.

Some son of a gun had learned he was not only the best mechanic in the shops, but a trade specialist from college as well. He was sent to New England to straighten out a sales-service tangle in a Summer resort. In two months he had consolidated two rival garages, doubled sales and in no time at all solved a vexatious mistake that gave two agents one job—with contracts—on a State line. Then he organized a metropolitan repair gang and spent a Winter in Florida pacifying tin-canners. On every job his work, his lucid reports, his tact made him exactly the man to straighten out either repair or sales-personnel difficulties, or to solve questions of mechanical adjustments to suit local gasoline, oil, humidity, aridity or what not. He had devised the salt-water coast rust question for the Fadeaways.

Just at the moment he was inactive. Watson had referred to his new fender design to meet exigencies of gumbo mud out where the paved highways end in the toughest dirt problem automobiles have to confront. Giving the Fadeaway fenders greater clearance, top and side, was simple enough—to one who had worked a car through the stuff.

Now, packed up, he hit Oil Creek and crossed Red River, learning at first hand the Trail of Many Blossoms as he eased his machine over the rolling lands, across muddy-looking rivers, between miles on miles of farms, cattle pastures and vacancies of landscape, from town to town; and away yonder, he entered the Land of Clustered Mountains.

The time was early Spring. The Trail of Many Blossoms awakened his derison as a name when he first read it. Now as day after day he rolled through the lakes, past the ridges, between the acres of Spring flowers, he found that the trail was named with unbelievable accuracy.

Many blossoms? There were lakes of blue flowers, miles long, in the valleys.

There were heaped-up mountains of yellow flowers. There were vistas of pink amid tumults of hills and down the lengths of valleys. Truly he had never seen so many flowers in all his life. They were fragrant with perfume, and their color sweetened life for him.

He was still young, and a certain emotion of loneliness and regret was fed by this beauty of color. Wouldn't it have been glorious, lovely, entrancing, to bring one's bride to such a land?

His poetic thoughts kept him company for days. The flowers grew in a measure monotonous. The towns became farther apart. The ranches receded from the roadside and stood against ranges across valleys or were indicated by signs at wagon ruts leaving the main highway, which read:

J. B. GUPPLES' RANCH
KEEP OUT

Others said, "Posted," or "No Trespass," or "No Hunting, Fishing or Camping." Atkin expected to see signs up, "Don't Pick Flowers," but these were absent.

And suddenly he saw the end of his seven hundred miles of flowers. At first he did not realize what had happened. He felt strange, a curious sensation of lack. He had run out into a bare and desolate land.

Stopping his car, he looked back. The flowers were behind him. He saw the edge of that unimaginable bed of posies. It was a line toward the northwest and southeast. Right there was the edge of the rainstorm. Where it had rained, the flowers had bloomed.

He rode on for hours; then he came to a belt of flowers half a mile wide. He crossed it. He could see that belt for ten miles across a valley and up over a long mountain ridge. On either side of it was the dry and dusty land, thirsty and bare. And when night fell he was out in a vast desolation where dull-blue masses of mountains rose in clusters while he followed two ruts on long straight runs from foot-hills to spur and from spur to V-notch far away.

And as the sun went down he saw a streak of horror enter the rut ahead of him. He ran over it. He went back to see the snake, expecting to find it cut in two. Instead the diamond-back rattler was coiled up, indignant but still playing fair, giving warning with that cold, dry rustle of fluttering death.

Then Atkin looked ahead into the golden mist of sunset, asking himself where in Hades he was going? He chilled a little as a whiff of tart wind struck him. He went on, but something went wrong under the hood. He was a first-class man. He adjusted the carbureter for thin, dry air—and knew he had solved practically one of his jobs down there on the Fadeaway car commission.

He came to a group of buildings. This was the crossway of the Trail of Many Blossoms and the Old Spanish Trail. Here dwelt two hundred people. He put his car into a garage, went to the hotel and after supper smoked with other patrons and a native or two.

The following day he went on into the southwest. That night he felt a thrill as he drew out his running-board bed at the "Tourist's Free Camp: Water and Shade." The following day would bring him to Talking Crow, his destination. He could only speculate on what Talking Crow might be.

After dawn he went to a short order, and then with full tank and plenty of oil, he turned to the left where an ornate hand pointed—

THE TRAIL OF MANY BLOSSOMS.

Three hours later he saw a ranch only three miles off the trail. That ranch fared small in the landscape, but Atkin regarded it with relief and hope. He passed a water-hole an hour later with eleven head of cattle near by. From this place he could see five groups of high, round-topped mountains. The nearest was probably ten miles to the eastward.

His trail pointed straight into the southwest; and far away at the remote horizon he saw a dim, pale blue that nevertheless suggested an enormous mass, despite the mirage. He rolled toward that mass for hours. Somehow he connected it with his destination. He had but a hundred miles to go that day. He thought he was making fast time over a bad road, but the speedometer seemed to lie. It said he was going only eight to ten miles an hour—too fast on that rough trail.

He ate an emergency lunch. Toward night he discovered a geometrical fleck ahead. It was a building. It filled him with expectation. He had hope. There perhaps he would find he was on the wrong road. At least a human being would be there. He wanted to see some one, any one, a man—somebody! Surely he had come a hundred miles—no! The speedometer said ninety-two.

The scattered mesquite was three feet tall. The cactus was low and wrinkled. A withered spray of dusty leaf and stem now and then indicated rare plants which had died.

He fixed his eyes on the building ahead. Instead of one building he saw at five miles that there were two of them. He rolled up behind one, a box-like structure. The other was on beyond a hundred feet. He came alongside what proved to be a garage, with oil-pump and a stack of junked cars and parts of cars.

Atkin looked at his speedometer. He had come a hundred miles. It chanced that he stopped at the pump, which stood at the crossing of two highways—the one he had followed and one that came out of the mirage of sunset at the west and headed indefinitely into the southeast, where a fringe of something was unquestionably a belt of cottonwoods on a stream bottom.

A YOUNG woman came sauntering from the other building toward the oil-pump. Atkin looked at her. Surely this was the Trail of Many Blossoms. He had seen a cactus in blossom seventy miles back. Here was a human being.

“Gas?” she inquired.

“Yes,” he said. “Which one of these forks goes to Talking Crow?”

“This,” she said, “is Talking Crow.”

“My ——!” he gasped, looking around.

“Oh!” she said. “I’ll bet you’re the man who bought this garage?”

He looked over his shoulder. There it was—

FADEAWAY SERVICE STATION

“I guess I am,” he replied after a time. “My name is Atkin.”

“Sure!” she nodded, gazing at him keenly. “Jim Kalens said you’d be along. There’s mail for you over at the office.”

“You’re postmistress?” he asked.

“No. Mother is. I’m the legal clerk, though. There’s a bunch of mail for you. Kalens left yesterday evening.”

She nodded toward the west, and with his glance Atkin followed that pair of ruts beyond the perspective point of which was a gap between two upstanding, precipitous ranges of mountains. He wondered if the man had said “Eenie-meenie-minee-moe” before making a choice of those trails.

“He ’lowed he’d go west,” she observed, reading his thought.

He looked at her. He saw a faintest flutter of amusement in the quiver of her lip-corners. He burst into a light laugh, just short of hysterical. She smiled appreciatively. At the same time her dark-blue eyes, clear and crystalline, displayed a pity, a kind of anxiety. She was sorry for him. She thought he had invested money in this place, sight unseen.

“Had supper?” she asked. “We’re sitting up.”

He threw wide the barn-doors of the garage and ran his car in. There were barrels of oil, a bench covered with greasy tools, a stock of tires, an air-tank and pump and no less than five cars, three old, with flat tires and a service car with a derrick. Despite the untidiness, the air of neglect and slattern ways, he saw that the place had a wonderful assortment of material.

“Jim told the company to take it on his debts,” she said. “And you took it from the company?”

“Yes,” he admitted. “I took it.”

“If a man’d tend to business,” she said, “this is a good place—no competition. It’s two hundred miles east to the next garage. North you know. West is a good place, in the Cougar Mountains. Good business all along the river. Fine farms down there. ’Course, it’s lonesome.”

“You don’t mean that!” he exclaimed, looking at her.

“Well,” she amended, “it depends on who’s here. Five have had this place in two years. They all quit. One went crazy.”

“That room?”

He nodded at the back of the garage.

“They lived there. Family of five for a spell.”

The two walked over to the other building. It was two stories high. The lower front room was a store. The rear room was kitchen and dining-room. The widow and her daughter lived up-stairs. In a ’dobe shack at the rear dwelt a harmless old Mexican and his wife.

“Mr. Atkin, who bought the garage,” the young woman said. “My mother—Mrs. Leeds. My name is Ella. I’ll bring your mail.”

She brought him five letters and a bundle of magazines. None of them rivaled in importance the supper that smoked in the oil-gas lamplight on the table. The coffee was excellent; the meat was fresh, roasted beef; and the old Mexican woman served hot biscuits three at a time. Flour gravy, rich and brown, was delicious.

"One thing": the young woman said, "we have good water. It's a spring and flows like a fountain, enough for our cows and some alfalfa over south. There's a sag there you wouldn't notice, that breaks into a regular cañon on beyond."

"But—where does the trade come from?" he asked.

"All over," she replied. "You'll be surprized. We're the only place anywhere around. Down in the river-bottoms there's more than you'd know. Cow outfits in every one of those mountains, too. Then there's lots of travel on these roads. You're a mechanic—good one?"

"I worked in the factory seven years—clear through."

"There are a lot of Fadeaways here. But lots of other cars, too. Some of the business would pay big—but I don't know——"

Thus in a doubtful break she looked at her plate, leaving the loose end of some unvoiced thought dangling. Atkin, keen to grasp hints, did not pick up the thread. Something in the young woman's bearing or tone restrained him. He would wait a little before looking into the trouble.

His mail he read while the daughter went out to sell something to customers who had arrived by a kind of desert magic; the letters were not illuminating. The home office had looked up the records and correspondence regarding Talking Crow. Tourists had complained of slack mechanical work; no less than five owners in the Talking Crow district had complained that the service didn't keep their cars in order. One had had his car laid up five weeks for lack of a steering-arm and knuckle.

Atkin went out to see that land by starlight. First he saw the red of the automobile tail light, heading toward the river. Then he saw the shimmering pallor, a kind of sparkle, from the sand and alkali. As he was about to look up a voice addressed him.

"I'm afraid you are disappointed, stranger?"

"I had no expectations, Miss Leeds," he replied. "I was so busy coming here that I didn't have time to wonder what I would find when I arrived. Of course—I'm interested."

"I'm afraid you won't stay long. Nobody does!" she remarked, in so matter-of-fact a tone that he missed for a time her own quiet resignation in what she said.

The automobile light glowed red steadily. The air was clear, carrying the rays brightly. In no other direction was there life or sign of humanity. He was a "trouble man." He wondered that any one ever had thought to put a garage at that crossroads. The store, the two women, even the highways were anomalies at such a point.

"Car coming!" she exclaimed.

Westward a flicker caught his eyes. It was low against a dark mass that loomed against the horizon.

"Thirty miles!" she went on. "They've just come through the pass."

"Those mountains over there—south?"

"The Vejos—beyond the river," she replied. "You never know when some one will come by. If that's a large car you'll sell them gas. That's one thing—any time, night or day, you're likely to be called out. Perhaps I ought to tell you. You never know who comes along. You will need to be careful. You must mind your own business. You have a gun?"

"No, I never carry one."

"No? Oh, probably it will be all right," she made haste to remark. "I don't know. We—we're pretty independent down here. I suppose you think this is a queer country?"

"Different from anything I ever saw," he admitted. "I'm a city man myself. I've been around quite a lot, but always in towns. Seemed like I was getting a long ways out when I was on my way here."

"Marie fixed everything there for you." She nodded toward the garage.

"That car'll be along about ten or eleven o'clock," she went on. "We go to bed pretty early here, but they'll rout you out for gas. Tourists probably. If it's farmers, they'll go on down to the river. Probably have to have gas anyhow."

She left him, and he went into the garage. He found a comfortable room in the back corner. The bed was iron, with mattress and everything clean, made up and ready for him to sleep. He was glad to see the water-tap and wash-bowl in the corner.

The water was not cold, but it was sweet and good. He brought back his suit-cases and hung up some of his spare clothes.

While yet he was putting his room to rights he heard a horn honk. A glance at his watch showed that little more than an hour had passed, but the car had come fast out of that western waste. He went out and recognized in the gloom and by the headlights a big Cravand Eight, good for twenty-five or thirty miles an hour on any road.

"Gas!" a voice called impatiently.

Atkin handed over the hose-nozzle and set himself against the pump-handle. The bell rang on the gallons, five gallons at a shot. The car took ten gallons.

"How much?" the driver demanded.

Atkins was nonplused. He didn't know. A hundred miles back he had paid twenty-seven cents. Rather than reveal his ignorance he replied—

"Three-fifty."

"Huh—gone down?" a voice demanded, reaching out three silver dollars and a fifty-cent piece.

"Oil?" Atkin asked, ignoring the question.

"Put in a quart—medium."

Atkin pumped out of the central of three barrels and poured it into the crank-case. That was forty cents more.

"Water, too, for the radiator," the driver ordered.

A sprinkling-pot by the gas-pump held plenty.

"Who are you?" a voice demanded. "Where's Kalen?"

"Gone," Atkin replied. "My garage now—my name is Jerry Atkin."

"Where you from?"

"Michigan."

The big car drew away, turned and headed toward the river road. Atkin watched it go. He did not like the tone of voice. He regarded the expensive car with dislike. He resented the curt questions. He felt in them a menace similar to that of the vast, quiet, overwhelming desert distances. He had charged too little for the gas—right price was probably forty cents a gallon. He must talk to Ella Leeds in the morning. He went to bed, tossed a minute in tired nervousness, then slept a long time.

Tooting of automobile horns roused him again. He went out in the dark and found two cars, one a truck, waiting at the pump. He filled both with gasoline, charged forty cents a gallon and gave them oil and water for the radiator. They drove swiftly away northward over the trail he had followed down. He heard the truck's cut-out throbbing long after he was in bed.

Then a flicker of light attracted his attention. He traced it to a window high in the room wall. He stood on his bed and saw coming the headlights of another automobile. He cursed the prospect of more business. The car came up within two hundred yards and turned out into the level ground beside the road. A few minutes later he heard the flat of an ax ringing on tent-stakes. A prowler came along, banging a pail—looking for water. Happily the garage fountain-tap was on the front wall, where the camper found it.

"I know why nobody stays here long!" he told himself. "People travel nights. The desert's no place to rest—on a road."

The call to breakfast was inexorable soon after daybreak. He was still weary from his long drive and from the interruptions in the night.

Over the breakfast table he asked about prices. He made a bargain for his meals. He plied the mother and daughter with questions about the garage, where the gasoline came from and the rates for towing, repairs and sundries. They could tell him some things, and from the information he easily scheduled prices for common things. Work would be one dollar and fifty cents an hour. Towing would cost one dollar a mile. It was customary to give service within ten miles, but the charge beyond that for repairs in the desert would be by the hour, and fifty cents a mile.

He was astonished at the traffic that came by, night and day. His first repair was eight miles out. A tourist brought in word that a car was stalled on the west road—wanted a mechanic. He went out and found a short circuit in a commercial traveler's ignition. The gasoline supply-truck tank came plowing out and drained five hundred gallons into his tank, for which he paid with money already taken in.

"Miss Leeds," he asked, "business doesn't keep up like this, does it?"

"Kind of quiet now," the young woman replied. "Farmers aren't moving much. You have had none of your most profitable business yet, either."

"No? What's that?"

She shook her head, remarking with a shrug of her shoulder:

"You'll see quick enough. The Pedro Reese car—that Cravand Eight. I heard them go by after filling here. They—um-m."

Her manner forbade inquiry.

A WEEK later an hour after dark five cars with dim headlights rolled up. They were light speed trucks. The Cravand Eight arrived a few minutes later. From it came a man who stood by as the gasoline poured in. Water was put into the radiators, and oil called for by the gallon.

"How much?" the man asked.

"Forty cents," Atkin said. "Mistake the other night—thirty-five."

"I thought so—owe you a half then?"

"My mistake!" Atkin exclaimed quickly, refusing the proffered silver.

"Something wrong with that yellow truck—back-fires. Fix it?"

Atkin threw up the truck-hood. He listened to the motor. At low speed it was hitting back. Turning quickly, it gainspeeded rapidly with sharp barking. He looked into the timer; using his screwdriver, he pried into it and then set it up tight. Started again, the motor throbbed prettily.

"Fired too quick," Atkin explained.

"Good!" the fleet manager, or owner, nodded and handed a bill to Atkin.

The garage man reached for his pocket and brought out a handful of silver, but the other said:

"That's all right, Atkin! Want you to look after us here."

The caravan started, one car after another. The big touring-car darted on ahead while the loaded trucks followed, lurching in the undulations of the hard-pan roadway toward the north. Atkin watched them go, wondering. He strolled over to the store and found the young woman on the wide porch.

"Old Pete Reese say anything?" she asked, a nervousness in her voice.

"No—just filled up. Said I should take care of his trucks. What is he, rancher? Carrying three thousand on each of those trucks."

"Yes, he pretends to be a rancher," she replied in a low voice. "He's why—Nobody can do business with him— I mean——"

Atkin whistled. Right there and then he saw a glimmer of light. He slept all that night on his inspiration. In the morning Ella and the Mexican woman backed out the Leeds automobile from a garage behind the store. They were going to the railroad ninety miles away. Atkin drew the girl to one side. He handed her a hundred-dollar bill.

"I want a carbine, .30-30," he said, "and the best revolver you can buy. I mean for business. Bring me some cartridges, too."

She stared at him with parted lips. Three times she started to speak, but thought again. Then she exclaimed:

"Yes, sir, Mr. Atkin! Yes, sir! I'll do it! I'm glad you feel that way."

Ella Leeds brought back a thousand cartridges for each of the weapons. She had, too, a belt with an open, outjutting holster, with loops for double rows of cartridges for the pistol—she brought an automatic instead of a revolver, by the way.

"You said you didn't have any gun. Can you shoot?"

"Some—not much," he admitted.

"Oh, I know how. I mean—the way——"

"Will you show me?"

"Yes, sir!" she exclaimed.

Her voice and expression were eloquent—and flattering besides. Atkin was being approved!

He thought he knew how, a little; but she showed him that he did not know anything. Driving out five or six miles in the open desert, she made him draw, shoot, put back the pistol draw and shoot again. When he had shot repeatedly she said he wasn't so stiff in his elbow as he had been, but his wrist wasn't loosened up a bit. With the rifle he did better.

She drove the car and at forty miles an hour made him shoot at cactus lobs, jack-rabbits and other marks. Day after day she kept him at the practise. She did not once even hint what it was all about.

In the meanwhile cars came in to be attended to. Fadeaways appeared. All of them needed tightening up. Some needed cleaning out. Working fast and with the consummate skill of a master mechanic who has taken a post-course in a specialty, he put the cars into perfect condition. On all cars, whatever their make, he did the best he knew.

At weekly intervals Pedro Reese and his outfit came through. Going back empty, they broke springs; and Atkin overhauled the motors, which clearly had been under terrific strains. Nothing was said, no observation made, that the garage man could take exception to; but he felt the tense and watchful bearing of the patron of his shop.

◆

ONE night at about nine o'clock two men with a camping-outfit in an old, rattling flivver came in. They asked for immediate repairs on springs and headlights. Atkin found at least two hours' work ahead of him. He did not demur. The night was better than day in that dry, hot land, for work.

In the distant quiet he heard a car coming—that of Reese. A minute later the man trotted into the circle of light, where Atkin was renewing chafed cables.

"Atkin!" Reese exclaimed. "I'm broke down—two cars. Bring your tools!"

"Be an hour before I'll be through here," Atkin replied.

"Drop that blanked flivver. I want you right away!"

Atkin went on working for a minute without saying anything. Reese tramped around, his face growing darker and beginning to twist. The two men in the shadow, waiting for their car, said nothing; but Atkin saw them as they stood side by side—young fellows, cowboys or the like, but probably no one in particular.

"You comin'?" Reese demanded.

Atkin had for some time had a suspicion increasing as to why the Fadeaway service station at Talking Crow was unsatisfactory. He realized that local people had made their complaints covert, not daring to demand fair play, but still wanting an investigation. Now he confronted the problem.

He crawled out from his work under the hood and in front of the dashboard. He straightened slowly. In his hand was a short off-set wrench. He saw as he turned that Reese had his hand on a pistol-butt. Atkin had met his share of crises, but never before had he faced an angry gunman crook in a land where the scoundrel felt safe to do murder.

"Just a moment, Mr. Reese," Atkin said quietly, stepping along the side of the flivver as if he were looking into the tonneau for a tool.

"Now! Come with me!" Reese snarled, stepping toward Atkin, who with a slithering step met him in that half-second off guard.

The light wrench tapped Reese on the skull behind his ear, and the bully went down like a log.

Atkin, as the man fell, snatched the automatic pistol. He leaned over the prostrate man and picked three other automatics from the bully's clothes—two small ones from pockets and the other large one from a belt hidden under a loose coat.

"First come first served in this shop, Mr. Reese!" Atkin said in a cool voice as he stood there.

"Old man!" a soft voice said at his elbow. "Shake!"

He turned, surprized. The two customers were at his side, both with long and beautiful weapons drawn. They had left him to manage the situation, but for backing he had had stalwart and efficient men. Old Pete Reese hadn't had a chance in the world, it was plain now.

Atkin took the proffered hands. The slouching, dusty strangers out of the desert, mere automobile tourists, had in them now an air of distinction. They towered in the shadowy illumination of the dingy garage battery globe and handy service light. One of them leaned over the prostrate man, who was as inert as a half-filled bag of potatoes.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Atkin, we'd like to go down the river road—to that repair job?" the shorter of the two suggested.

Atkin looked. He saw revealed two little stars. He stood staring at these youngish-looking fellows. He saw through their intrepid bearing a certain loftiness of pride and efficiency, a stern vigor of standards lived up to. He puzzled a moment wonderingly.

"I beg pardon," he said. "Are you Rangers?"

"Yes, sir," they both replied. "We want to look over that repair job this man was speaking about."

"Sure!" Atkin exclaimed. "I'd rather go down there with you, a blamed sight!"

The two heaved the prostrate Reese into his own car. Atkin saw them slip precautionary wristlets of steel around his wrists, though this was excusable only in the premises that he had attacked a lone garage man. Atkin slipped into the driver's seat—Reese had come alone—to drive down the road to find the stalled trucks.

Atkin exulted. Never in his life had he faced a desperado before. Now he had at hand a desperado's weapons, captured at the head of a wrench! For weeks he had been practising shooting, nerving himself for the inevitable crisis—but with clammy dread and indignation, stimulated only by the silent approval of the girl who was showing him the best practise on the draw and shoot in the Southwest. He stepped on the gas in that huge, beautiful car till the flywheel hummed and the long chassis and tonneau undulated over waves of desert surface like a frightened jack-rabbit.

The truck caravan, all dark, appeared ahead of them. The five speed trucks were in two groups, three together and the two disabled ones a hundred yards astern. The Cravand Eight's headlights shone over all the machines as Atkin swung out to bring the long, wide beams upon the whole scene. Between the two and three cars in a group in the roadway stood the drivers and guards—ten men. The two rangers swung out behind Atkin. This was their job.

"Put 'em up, boys!" one said. "Rangers!"

A burst of indignant breath, a gasp loud in the desert night, greeted that demand. There was no nonsense, however. The ten men stretched instinctively in a line with their hands up. When a Ranger has the drop that's all there is to it. When two of them have their guns out, with the advantage of surprize in their favor, the worst men in the world don't even hesitate. And two men from the truck shadows came out and meekly put up their hands too, despite any advantage they might have had from ambush, and at the moment unsuspected. They simply didn't think of trying to get the two Rangers, knowing that one or both of those men would come back, even in the throes of bullet-wounds.

Motor trouble in one of the trucks was quickly remedied. The other was jacked up and the damage of a collapsed spring and broken chassis brace temporarily repaired by Atkin. While one Ranger stood guard, whistling softly, the other looked into the center of the neatly stowed loads of alfalfa bales.

"Yeh!" he called across to his partner. "Booze! Mescal—and metheglin."

They gave the truck-drivers their orders. The caravan moved northward in the desert, all the lights blazing. They drew up like a military convoy at Talking Crow. Daylight was at hand. The twelve runners swung down before the garage. Pete Reese, with a lump under his left ear like a half-coconut, came down from the Cravand Eight. He was stooped, stiff-necked and hunched up, his self-assurance gone forever.

Ella Leeds stood looking on from between the store and the garage. She looked at the Rangers.

"Howdy, boys!" she smiled. "Morning, Mr. Atkin!"

"Good morning!" he replied. "Wonder can we all have breakfast?"

"Oh yes!" she smiled. "We were expecting company—lots of it!"

Two hours later three trucks rolled westward. Two, as their repairs had been but temporary, remained—empty—for Atkin's care. Also the little old flivver in which the Rangers had toured went into the garage pile of junk. When they had gone on, Atkin hauled the two disabled cars alongside the garage to await the action of the courts confirming with papers of formal seizure. Probably the buyer at the auction would want them repaired. Then he started on a carbureter, methodically. Ella Leeds came out to stand by, frowning.

"You've worked all yesterday and all night!" she suggested.

"Eh—why, that's right! I sure forgot!" he admitted. "I ought to be tired——"

"Of this country?" she asked quickly.

He wiped his hands on cotton waste. He walked with her to the purple shadow on the west side of the garage. The Rangers and their prisoners had been gone two hours. The dust of their wheels rose in a tawny cloud far out on the trail toward the pale mountains to the west. Southward the Vejos rose pale on points and peaks, but dark and shadowed in the depths of cañons and on the westward slopes.

"Tired of this country?" he repeated puzzled. "Why—I've only just begun to be used to it!"

"You like it. Can it be—you *like* it!" she exclaimed. "You're the first——"

"I love it!" he said with sudden intensity. "Why—a man's not crowded——"

"You say that—after last night?" she demanded.

"Oh—sure! Old Pete crowded me. Just the same——"

"You love it!" she looked at him wonderingly.

"That's right!" he nodded. "Its people—that means you, too."

"Oh!"

She caught her breath as if suddenly seized, adding:

"Really? You mean—you'll stay?"

"I'll stay!" he replied, his eyes hardening, his jaw setting. "If you'll let me, I'll stay. The company—the Fadeaway sent me down here to straighten things out. But I expect they'll let me have this garage. You know, with this water, why we can build a city here! Fine place—a good crossing for it. I wouldn't be surprized if a railroad——"

"That'd spoil it all!" she sighed. "Isn't it good enough as it is?"

"Sure!" he laughed.

The Fadeaway Motor Company away up yonder heard no more complaints from Talking Crow. Indeed, tourists were at pains to let the home office know that down there in the Border desert was a man who ought to be especially commended for his courtesy and ability. The executives know it. They are wrathy in their inability to understand what has come over their special agent Atkin. Imagine, one of the best men in the business, with a steady job, a fine wage—staking himself permanently away down yonder on the edge of nowhere at a crossroads garage in the middle of the deserts!

Well, some things are just beyond belief.

NUGENT AMUCK

by

Ralph R. Guthrie

Author of "Send Millikin to Misamis."

FOR the first time in eighteen years, six months and twenty-one days, Vincent P. Nugent, former M. S. E., Signal Corps, United States Army, was completely out from under the baleful eye of military authority. For just a week he had enjoyed the sensation of at last being a citizen of the republic, eligible to vote like other normal males, white or black, who have attained their majority and kept out of the penitentiary.

Some old soldiers when emancipated seem stunned by the radical change in their condition and lapse into morose, carping critics of the service. A few take to loafing, betel-nut chewing and drink. A still more negligible quantity discard their past associations as one chucks a condemned pair of canvas leggings and sally forth right merrily to look for a job. But no matter what they do—so long as they don't "go native" and take on a brown-skinned wife—the recruiting officer seldom fails to get them in the end, and they "re-up."

Master Signal Electrician Nugent had never been so glad of anything as he was when he "purchased out" to become his own boss. He would tell the cock-eyed world that he had led a hard life serving his Uncle Samuel in our insular possessions, particularly in Mindanao. It had been just one cold, cruel disappointment after another until the spleen deposit in his system would have filled a camp-kettle. This was the how of it.

Since his second "hitch" had taken him on a temporary visit to the States his service had been continuously in the Philippines. Not always had he been a growling malcontent. In his prime no service had been too swift for him. He had worked hard as a signal corps man. Learned all the ins and outs of the scattered archipelago and most of the dialects. Without a moment's hesitation he could launch into whatever language met the exigencies of duty—Moro, Visayan, Ilocanan, Pampangan, Macabebe, Tagalog, Pangasinan, and even Bicol. It was all the same to Nugent. And he could send and receive the international code by radio faster than any other operator in the departmental net.

All of this he had been able to do; but what came of it at last? Why, simply this: The Army had turned nasty-nice and forbidden soldiers attending cock-fights and drinking native hootch. The Army had lost all sympathy with and understanding of the men who consituted the outposts of empire. It was bound to disintegrate with dry rot; and just to prove that this was so, Nugent cited the case of "Clockface" Hennessey at CWY. It was the crowning achievement of a mischievous military policy.

For twelve years now Clockface was radio operator in the departmental radio net at CWY while Nugent held down a similar post at CWN station. In other words they were in constant liaison with each other, Clockface at Papanga and Nugent at Michoacan, forty miles away, which was the limit of the range of their reconstructed hand-generator sets.

Although they seldom met, these two men knew each other intimately and could converse in an improvised code that would make your ears ring with its continuity of dots and dashes. Neither ever thought of using a call letter; neither ever had to break in to get the straight of a message. And when they were not transmitting regular business they spent hours gossiping, as old soldiers will, while the small dynamo which had been installed to relieve aching backs and tired muscles hurled its full strength of one hundred and ten volts into the antennæ.

Then a new signal officer came to the island and, finding things pretty dull, decided to "scramble up" the operators by moving Clockface to CWK at Las Pinas, which was out of range of Michoacan, and relieved Nugent to make him supply non-com of the signal dump.

The legendary bull in a china shop never did more damage to delicate machinery.

So Nugent, having a grouch against the Army, bought out, ostensibly for the purpose of starting a rubber plantation. What he did was to begin at once to absorb as much of the existing liquor supply as his physical and financial capacity would permit—something he seldom attempted in the service—and from the heights of newly acquired citizenship to hurl jeremiads at his fellow patriots who still wore the uniform. This furnished him with divertissement for one week.

Then he heard of trouble brewing between the native constabulary and Datto Lunga and decided to recall himself to the colors. It was in "Musty Ale Mike's" place in the Moro end of the village that he made the announcement.

" 'S got to be done," he declared. "Rebellion is rebellion, th' world over. 'S got to be squelched; and who's goin' to do it? Who's goin' to tell the Gov'nor Gen'ral what's what?"

None of the twenty or more doughboys present appeared to be able to answer him, although some one did vouchsafe a "you tell 'em" from the door.

"Where's Jack Pershing?" he demanded. "Commandin' Gen'ral of the armies of the United States! Ought to be right here!"

He pounded the bar vigorously.

"I'll bet no one's told him what I learned ten minutes ago—that Dato Lunga and forty spiggoties has gone wild up to the mountains. Them native *constabularios* is licked before they begin!"

"Hurray!" shouted a rookie, edging out of reach, Nugent's fistical prowess being well known.

"Did I hear some one speak?" growled the inebriated one. "Did I hear some one speak? What unsupfisticated and uncouth son-of-a-gun says 'at's not the whole truth and nothin' but?"

"Go on! You're all right," assured the recalcitrant who had interrupted the harangue. "Tell us about the constabulary."

"I know what I'll do," declared Nugent irrelevantly. "Big uprising's got to be checked. The Army's no good any more. Too —— namby-pamby. A man can't drink, and he can't swear, and he can't gamble. My new company commander wore spectacles and a frock coat when he was off duty.

"I had been in th' Army eighteen years, six months and twenty-one days. Thinkuvit! Never had a grunt against anybody but the ol' mess sergeant. Gen'ral Pershing used to say: 'That man Nugent's a credit to th' whole shebang. Lookit th' way he fans th' ether with Clockface Hennessey.'

"I've heard him say it many a time in his counsels of state."

Nugent thumped the bar vigorously for an encore on the drinks, the last having been on the house.

"Thinkuvit!" he commanded one and all. "I was about to make the Army my perfession. Then I saw the C. O. wearin' spectacles with a string tied to 'em an' quit cold to become a 'stensive rubber-planter. That was las' week. Today I returns to my 'riginal callin' because there's a rubber uprising afoot that the ol' Army can't handle. They sapped away th' vitality of the 'nlisted man when they took away the canteen and began to wear spectacles. That's what they did!

"Don't hold me, boys!" he pleaded, although nobody appeared to be about to do so. "I've gotta go back an' mop up some googoos. What you see's patri'tism. Stand at a'tention, boys, an' give ol' Nugent th' proper amount of *vivas* as he sallies forth to battle for his country. Say, attaboy! But before you do it—le's have 'nother drink."

He made an eloquent gesture toward the barkeep. In consequence a decanter on the bar was knocked over and decapitated at the shoulders on the footrail. There was now no longer any doubt that he would return to the service. It cost him his two remaining pesos to square the bill. Musty Ale Mike, alarmed at his growing inebriety, took him gently by the arm, and thus without noise or demonstration the old hero began the first unsteady leg of his journey to put down the rebellion.

IT WAS blistering hot outside. Resisting the impulse to unburden his seething soul at once to the recruiting officer, Nugent fought manfully against a truculent and deceitful natural law which sought to undermine his footing by rocking the landscape, and drifted gradually into the shade. Once there he patrolled a circle around a friendly town pump until he felt himself to be in full possession of his faculties.

Then he trekked gingerly but with a rapidly decreasing wabble of the feet, in the direction of a multicolored poster with a picture on it of three marines on top of a beetling cliff hoisting a flag while a band played on the beach below.

"Join the Army and see the world laugh at you," he muttered cynically as he brushed by and entered the building.

The recruiting officer, a second lieutenant, was in a cynical mood that afternoon, due no doubt to the fact that it was almost time to close for the day and it was hot and stuffy in his eight-by-twelve office.

"Back again?" he grinned none too amiably. "How about the Nugent Interplanetary Rubber Corporation?"

The soldier coughed and fixed his eyes on the floor.

"Well, sir," he explained, "I still think there are fine opportunities in the rubber business for a good booster. But I came to the conclusion on account of my many qualifications for the service that the Army might need me most."

"You think the Army needs a promoter, eh?"

"Not a promoter—a pullmotor," Nugent grumbled dryly. "It's been dead ten years and don't even know it."

"Still grousing, are you? Well, that means you are healthy anyway."

Turning to a spick-and-span soldier at a typewriter—

"Here, Corporal Cole, get this man's papers made out."

"Now, Nugent," he continued testily, "you are coming back into the service with a bad grouch and worse liquor in your system. We don't stand for heavy drinking on or off duty, you understand? When the corporal gets through with you get into the next room and off with your clothes for a complete medical inspection. Can't be too careful whom we let into the service these days. We enlisted a rooky the other day who had been running on alcohol so long that the doctor found a carbureter in his wind-pipe."

The medical examiner was comfortably asleep on his bunk in quarters when Nugent finally was ready for inspection; but of course Nugent didn't know that. He waited around in a deserted room for half an hour before he decided to make a cautious round of inspection on his own account and found himself alone in the building.

The clinic door was ajar. The soldier thought there might be something cool to drink in there and pushed his way in. There wasn't anything cool, but on a shelf was a large bottle labeled "Medicinal Rum." Nugent removed it with a satisfied grunt and retired to a bench, still unclothed.

Tokio
Yokohama
Nagasaki
Shanghai
JAPAN
CHINA
FORMOSA
Hongkong
FR. INDO-CHINA
SIAM
Manila
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS
CHINA SEA
Mindanao
Singapore
SUMATRA
BORNEO
NEW GUINEA
JAVA
Gulf of Carpentari
AUSTRALIA

Several hours later the sun had set and the Mindanao moon was rising over the distant peaks, but Nugent still slumbered nude on his hard couch.

There were stealthy footsteps after a time, and a light flashed on. Corporal Cole and three bosom friends, plus a poker deck and a cigar-box filled with red, white and blue chips, were showing up for their nightly tournament in the dispensary.

"Look at this," invited Cole with disgust. "Old man Nugent soused to the gills but still waiting for the doc to pronounce him physically fit. What are we going to do with him?"

"Paint him with iodin and mark him 'Duty,'" suggested Private Budinsky.

"Well, there's some iodin around here," Cole acquiesced. "Let's work on him and then turn him out to grass."

A bottle and a swab of cotton were requisitioned from a cabinet in the operating room, and four soldiers wrought their various inspirations on the limp form of the Army's best M. S. E. They painted his feet first, discoloring the nails and making cute little rings around the toes. Then they gave him a skeleton effect by outlining his bones with broad brown streaks. If the results of their labor did not represent the highest type of art it was at least satisfying to the eyes of all critics present. Cole finally emptied what remained in the bottle casually on the bald poll of the recumbent and called it a day's work.

"Take him out and set him on yon distant bench," he ordered. "On with the game."

It was nearly midnight when a heavy tropical dew placed its clammy hand on Nugent's brow, causing him partly to regain consciousness. He was surprized and faintly chagrined to discover the apparent absence of the ordinary adornments of civilized life, but the pale light of the moon was not sufficient to make conspicuous the markings which transformed his brawny frame into a clever counterfeit of a South Sea devil-devil.

A piece of condemned canvas was wrapped about his hips like a native *sarong*, and a gunny-sack, intact, had been coiled around his head into a semblance of a turban, its loose ends tucked in and fastened with wire nails. The hall-mark of the soldier jokester was blatantly obvious.

"For eighteen years, six months and twenty-one days I've been a model of the service, and now see what they've done to me," he gurgled with a gesture of disgust. "Jealous, that's what! Just because I bought my way out and got rich speculating in rubber. Had to celebrate, didn't I? Had to! Couldn't get around it. Can't drink in the service; got to drink out of it. Never'll go back now until I clean up on the whole blasted gang of 'em. T' —— with the U. S. Army."

He fooled around a while on the hill where he had found himself and then started down the moon-lit slope toward the village. The first hut he came to he tried to enter, but found the door locked. There was a larger one farther down the road, and in it a dim light was burning. He took it to be an illicit card-game. Very well, he'd break it up.

"Captain says men must not gamble," he declared grimly.

The door failed to give before his gentle pressure; but he knew somebody was up because through the generous cracks came a babble of sound indicative of a large and exuberant party. He tried the dog-hole, managing to negotiate its narrow portal by wriggling through on his side, coming up behind a solid wall of brown, bare backs. Not soldiers, but natives.

Some one was speaking a dialect of the northern Moro tribes, so he was quite understandable to Nugent. The orator was a perfect stranger, but he spoke him fair, and the words brought happiness and contentment to the soul of his uninvited guest.

"The Army of the *Americanos* is the most tyrannical and overbearing on earth!" exclaimed this stranger. "It has taken advantage of the unfortunate condition in which we find ourselves. It has misused its power and authority. It has made us feel the sting of humiliation and disgrace. But we are a proud people. We will drive this Army into the sea. We will boil it in the burning oil of our wrath."

Here was a man's man. Boil the Army and its recruiting gang in hot oil. Take all the cosmoline and axle grease in the quartermaster warehouses and heat it with a blowtorch. Then get the guys who robbed him of his clothes and soak them in it and watch them sizzle.

"Hurray!" shouted Nugent out of his turn.

IN AN instant the meeting was in a turmoil. The strange figure of a partly nude, zebra-striped soldier arose from the rear and advanced hand outstretched to greet the speaker.

At once two dispositions were apparent in the massed assemblage. Those nearest the hut walls were for getting out and on to the open highways without undue loss of time and motion. Those who felt that to run was to court injury from the flailing arms of their stampeded brethren, decided to make a historic stand until traffic conditions somewhat cleared up. It was obvious to every one that the invader was a huge native or renegade *Americano* who had painted his toes, arms and legs and run amuck—a crazy man to be feared and therefore to be respected. He would continue to kill, kill, kill, until something or somebody cut short his career. Yet, as a Moro would put it, he was "insane and very respectable."

The wielding of the creese and bolo is an art among the Moros, but there was little room for the proper swing. A knife slit one of Nugent's ears, and the blunt surface of a war club biffed him alongside the temple.

He came up short, surprized and angry. Something was wrong with the spirit of this gathering. Then the point of a javelin grazed his stomach, and with a mighty roar he turned himself loose.

Half a dozen natives were knocked down or into the arms of their compatriots; as many more were bleeding from jabs, swings and uppercuts before something like organized effort came out of the seething maelstrom of brown bodies and the soldier was overpowered and tied hand and foot. Even then he tried to bite the reluctant hands that tried to pin him to the ground. He was a veritable besom of combat.

Inasmuch as a man run amuck is a personage in a Moro camp he can not be dispatched in the ordinary manner. Usually he is one who has committed some crime against the tenets of his faith and desires death by violence above all other things. If he is killed fighting, he believes, he will go directly to Paradise and stand before his creator purged of all sin. If not—there is a Mohammedan Gehenna which is seven times hotter than anything that Dante ever dreamed of over a Welsh rabbit.

Nugent, down and hog-tied, therefore was a problem to his enemies. In the first place he was amuck, and it would be almost discourteous to behead him then and there. In the second place a closer inspection proved him to be an *Americano*, and nobody could tell just how much he might have heard of a very delicate discussion which had reached its height when he rudely broke into the meeting.

After much heated argument they came to the conclusion that the whole matter was beyond their province and up to the keener judgment and wisdom of Datto Lunga, who was miles away in the heart of the hinterland. They decided to take him there before he could be missed by his comrades.

An escort of five Moros were told off to accompany the captive, and from subsequent events it appeared that their orders were embodied in two short sentences—

"Get him there," and, "Don't kill him."

Nothing more evidently was desired, and they added no frills that by the wildest contortions of the imagination could be construed as exceeding instructions. At first they tried tying the man's legs around the belly of the small mule chosen to be his mount; but last night's debauch and the hot sun, coupled with loss of blood, made it next to impossible for Nugent to maintain such a position. He would gradually slip to one side or the other and soon be hanging head down and in danger of contact with the animal's hoofs. When this happened the mule would stop and Nugent would begin to swear.

After several attempts the Moros gave it up as a bad job and tied the M.S.E. face down, pack-saddle wise, across the mule's back. It was a trying experience for the old soldier, and his survival of it speaks volumes for the physical fitness engendered by a few years, or decades, of military training in Uncle Sam's legions.

Up one wooded slope and down another with a tropical sun burning his back to a lobster red, the scantling back of the burro cutting like a knife into his stomach, blood running from his battered head and tongue fairly hanging out with thirst—that was about all of it that Nugent could remember afterward. However, he was getting to be more himself with each jolt, and his brain, though it seemed like a ball of molten lead in his skull, began to function more clearly. By twisting his head a little he could make some note of the landscape and judge the distance traversed.

After about ten miles of rough country the little party took a route that dipped to a jungle bottom near the bank of one of those torrential, turgid streams which cut the Mindanao hills in a hundred places. The path was none too broad; and thorny branches swung across it, tearing at his flesh or smiting him cruelly about the face and head. Here the Moros stopped briefly to refresh themselves at a cool spring gushing out of a moss-covered bank bordered with ferns ten feet high. Even the mule was allowed the privilege of drinking his fill; but to the human burden on his back none paid the slightest heed.

For sticking out his tongue and mutely begging for half of a coconut of water in the hands of one of the convoy Nugent received the shell with a crash on his temple and for some little time knew nothing further of his tribulations. It was the most merciful thing that happened to him on the trip.

When he came back to earth they were winding through a forest of giant trees but were still close to the river. He knew this by the mango swamp on his right, by the towering cogon grass along the trail and by the hordes of fruit bats hanging like clusters of soiled dishrags from the branches. Later they took to an incline which seemed to ascend a cone of dry volcanic cinders, and then they crawled and slid alternately down into a crater and into the mountain fastness of Datto Lunga and his hostiles.

There Nugent was disassociated from his hateful companion, the burro, and thrust head down toward a brackish pool to drink his fill, which he did with his face buried in the slime while his captors laughed the snickering laugh of the Moro hill man and nudged one another in the ribs with their elbows. When he had finished they dragged him roughly away, while the leader went to apprize the *datto* of their arrival with a prisoner of war.

Strange enough Datto Lunga was something of a conservative in his general estimate of the task which confronted him. He did not propose to rush pellmell into a war with the United States as a whole, or even to free the island at once from foreign domination. That would come later, he thought.

His immediate ambition was to annihilate the Filipino Christians in Mindanao. This would entail the defeat of the constabulary recruited from the northern islands, including Luzon; and to accomplish this end pilfering raids had been carried on systematically during the past year. They appeared on the surface to be insignificant bandit operations; but the net gain was a badly needed store of rifles, a couple of machine guns and a few articles of signal corps and engineers issue from the constabulary school at Malabang.

Lunga was a natural guerrilla chief, but a man without education and superstitious to the core. His chief of staff, Ali Goka, was a creature of a different stripe—a wordly-wise trader in hemp, turned fanatic and seer, who claimed to be bullet-proof and to have the power of transmitting his immunity to others. Until he arrived the Moros were of the firm opinion that American ammunition was no respecter of persons.

"If thy claim is true, O holy one," declared the half-convinced Lunga when the standard of revolt was first raised, "then there is no doubt about the outcome of our enterprise. Thou hast the look of a madman, but it is with such the Prophet loves to transmit his messages to those he would enlighten. But if it is but a worthy conviction or only half-true, then the infidel may overcome us, for they outnumber us ten to one. I would have therefore a word from the Prophet himself authenticating thy most worthy claim, or see thee test thine immunity against a bullet from my rifle."

There was a problem for the wiley Ali! He must either arrange an interview between Lunga and the Prophet or else elect himself target upon which his superior no doubt would make repeated efficiency tests with high-power, steel-jacketed bullets.

After due deliberation Ali decided it would be best to take time out and go up on the mountain-top to pray. When he returned his face was wreathed with happy smiles.

"The Prophet appeared to me out of a cloud," he intoned in the monotonous voice of a priest reading from the Koran. "His face was as of living fire; there was a rainbow about his middle. His feet were as shining brass and his voice like thunder. He spake chidingly and said:

"'Wherefore does the *datto* doubt my message through thee? I will do even as I said. But the bullets which my power will turn are not the bullets of the true believer, but of the infidel!'"

"*Bueno!*" exclaimed Lunga. "I had thought it might even be thus. I have in this camp a dog of a Tagalog who is known to be a follower of the foreigner's debasing faith. We shall use him to prove to my fighters that the Prophet is indeed with us. It shall be a sign that we are invincible."

The crafty smile disappeared instantly from the face of Ali Goka, and he raised a dissenting hand.

"Nay!" he cried in genuine alarm. "The Prophet spoke further. He said:

"'I will myself speak with Datto Lunga, as with thee, when the time comes that he is prepared to strike. He shall make no test of my promise until then.'

"At that, O worthy *datto*, he disappeared back into his cloud."

THAT was the situation when former Master Signal Electrician Vincent P. Nugent was brought in a sadly dilapidated state of mind and physique to the camp of the insurgents. After granting him the drink beforementioned the escorting party dumped him in the shade of a banana plant and hastened to report his arrival to their chief. The *datto* and his chief of staff were engaged in an endless game of Chinese checkers in their general headquarters, and took recess reluctantly to stroll down the slope to see the mad prisoner.

A surprize awaited them upon their arrival. Nugent was swearing lustily at every one in view. Meanwhile the men who had brought him thither were engaged in pawing him over while they fought for place near his writhing, indignant form. They were hopping about like crows attacking a wounded sparrowhawk, gesticulating, arguing, uttering cries of excitement and wonder, the principal note of which was—

"*Goo-kel* *"

Lunga strode into the midst of them, striking right and left with the short staff which was his badge of office.

"What is this?" he cried with marked disappointment when he observed only the undraped Nugent. "You shout, 'Miracle' like pious pilgrims. But I see nothing but a naked *Americano* with red hair."

"This man ran amuck," explained one of the more intelligent members of the escort. "When we placed him on the mule to bring him here for your most worthy scrutiny he was painted from head to foot. It has not rained. Not a drop! And yet, look! All the paint has disappeared as if it never was there."

The *datto* glanced carefully over the recumbent figure and saw that this was so. He did not know, of course, that iodin is a volatile liquid and decolorizes readily when influenced by the dual agency of sunshine and perspiration.

"What have you to say?" he inquired gravely in English. "Are you amuck?"

The soldier scowled at him.

"I sure am!" he grumbled savagely. "I'm amuck against the whole —— United States Army, which same stole my clothes.

---

* Miracle.

Also, if I get my two good fists free I'm going to organize a one-man punitive expedition against some of these yahoos of yours that raked their vile fingers over my sunburned back a minute or two ago. By the beard of the Prophet, I'm a Mohammedan from now on until I die fighting. But I'm not particular whether I kill white or black, Christian or Moro, if I get my hands loose."

The *datto* caught only part of the outburst owing to his rather limited stock of American words. He thought he understood Nugent to say, however, that he was a Mohammedan and turned inquiringly to his priest. Ali did not get any of it, but his active mind began scouting around for something significant in the miracle of a mad American whose war-paint could be removed by divine intervention. He replied in Moro *patois* that it was perhaps a sign from the Prophet.

The soldier listened carefully to the conversation that followed, deciding to make the most of it and confine himself to English and Tagalog until he was safely out of his difficulty. Meanwhile he wanted fervently to have the bonds loosened on his hands and feet and to get something to eat and smoke. He would have to approach this achievement with infinite tact and craft because he could not conceive of his captors wasting any mercy on a prisoner of war.

Putting two and two together, he figured that Ali Goka was in a bit of a tight place too and decided instantly to attempt a *rapprochement*. Leisurely, therefore, he turned his back on the two. As he did so his roving eye fell upon a pile of signal equipment rusting in the open, and he could scarcely suppress a start of amazement. Instead, he addressed himself to the universe at large.

"!——" he ejaculated. "If the Prophet would only listen to me with my hands tied!"

Ali picked up his ears. The words were in Tagalog.

"What you do mean, mad one?" he demanded.

"Allah forgive me!" groaned Nugent. "I did not mean to speak such an important secret even in the presence of a holy man. But the sight of yon radio set almost overcame me. It is known that a prayer properly sent out into space on that instrument will travel far. And I have known the Prophet to answer.

"Ah, yes! Mohammed's chief operator has learned the telegraph code in order to keep in touch with what goes on here below. That angel, Abdullah, sure thumps a wicked key!"

Ali was frankly interested, if not convinced. He realized that here was a real ace in the hole and played it like a gentleman.

"Here is a man," he said, turning to Datto Lunga, "who is mad. I can tell from his ravings that he is a true believer whose welfare is in the hands of Allah and further that he is learned in the art of operating the mysterious box which talks through the air in the language of the telegraph. Allah has delivered him into our hands; for it is well known to the chosen of the Prophet that the Angel Abdullah pays special heed to petitions sent in this manner, and even answers them."

The *datto* drew the priest aside and discussed the matter at length.

"Good!" he said finally. "If the Prophet speaks to me through this box, then I will believe. To make sure that he is not playing upon us a trick, I shall have those near who can read the language of the telegraph and he shall send as I say. My learned operators who have served at the American railway station will record carefully. An executioner will take station immediately behind this man and if he is an impostor, or uses other words than I give him, off will go his head. Is it well said?"

"Well said," returned the priest, bowing humbly.

He understood perfectly that his own standing probably hung in the balance, dependent on the effectiveness of this test, which rested in turn on the vaporings of a crazy foreigner. Nevertheless it did not seem entirely improbable that prayers could be sent and answered in this way. It was such a mysterious method of transmitting speech that it easily could be part of the machinery of Heaven. Who indeed could tell, unless the trial were made?

THE two Moros returned to the soldier and had his bonds removed. He arose to his feet weakly. Ali signified by a gesture that his chief had further questions to ask and lapsed into morose silence.

"Are you indeed a follower of the Prophet?" Lunga inquired in Tagalog.

"By the beard of the Prophet, I am a true believer run amuck," replied Nugent in the same tongue. "Few are they in whom Mohammed has greater confidence."

"And how do you know this?"

"Mohammed himself has told me," came the startling rejoinder.

"How speak you with him who is in Paradise? Dost blaspheme in my presence, presumptuous one?"

The signal corps man essayed a cringe but succeeded only in looking more savage. The Moros fell back, thinking that he was crouching for a spring. The soldier pointed toward a wooden box in the mass of stolen equipment.

"Know you what that is?" he demanded.

"It is a radio set," replied the *datto*. "I have seen soldiers operate them. I have men here who can telegraph, and did they know how to put the thing together could use it in passing information through the air."

This was a shock, but Nugent smiled it off.

"Dost know that if a true believer sits at the key he can even talk with the angels?"

"Nay, I never thought that could be done. Is it true?"

"As true as it is that General Pershing wears an amulet that will turn away bullets."

Nugent was aching to get hold of the radio set; but the *datto* merely ran his fingers through his pompadour and smiled.

"My men," he said, "can operate it when it is so arranged. But I will speak further on this later."

The signal corps man was then taken under guard to a hut sitting in a rocky niche and evidently used for temporary prison or hold-over.

There was in it just then a Tagalog named Mundo—as fanatically Christian as Ali Goka was fanatically Mohammedan. He had been arrested in the act of proselyting on the flocks of Islam and had admitted the charge cheerfully, hoping thereby to salvage a glorious martyrdom out of the wreck of his hopes to spread the gospel throughout the island. The crime in itself might not have been sufficient to procure him more than a swift decapitation; but he had compounded the felony, according to Moro law, by knocking out two of the front teeth of the Moslem who offered him the alternative of accepting the "true faith."

Mundo wore horn-rimmed spectacles and posed as a man of letters and erudition, having graduated from a seminary in Manila. He greeted the newcomer with effusiveness as a fellow sufferer.

"They are going to take me apart inch by inch," declared Mundo with a cheerful grin after the usual greetings. "I am indeed the most fortunate of men. As the heathen cut away, each his separate portion, the raw wound will be cauterized with a red-hot horse-shoe. When it is all over and I can stand no more, then I shall shout, 'Hosanna!' and give up the ghost."

Nugent regarded him with awe in which was mingled a moiety of genuine respect.

"You've got grit, my boy; regular grit. But it won't do. These heathen are in rebellion against the Government of the United States, and the rebellion has got to be squelched. It's up to me to do it with such forces as I may be able to command, and you are it. In other words, I need you in my business."

"But the glorious martyrdom!" expostulated Mundo. "It is my chance to become a saint."

"Not this trip, you don't get any chance," retorted the ex-soldier grimly. "I came in late; but it's my party, old bucko, just the same. I don't want any more martyrdom talk. It's ways and means of getting out of this scrape that's up before the house. Now how are we goin' to do it?"

The Filipino's eyes began to glisten as hope displaced the determination to die gloriously by segments. He might live to become a second Paul of Tarsus after all.

"If the *Americano* can procure for me a bolo or a creese, I am quick with one, like lightning," he suggested, adding: "If I may not be a martyr I can at least be a militant Christian. It is written that St. George used a two-handed sword——"

Nugent cut him short with a grunt of disgust.

"Not that!" he snorted. "Them that lives by the sword dies by the same. What I want just now is a cock-eyed good lie to prevaricate my way back to——"

He hesitated. What did he want to go back to? A lump rose in his throat that almost choked him to tears.

"Back to the cock-eyed old Army," he concluded and lapsed into thought.

"I'll tell you what to do, Mundo," he broke out finally. "You're a Christian; no doubt about it. I'm supposed to be an

Americano who's went Mohammedan. I claimed to the *datto* and his high jinks today that I can *habla* with Mohammed by wireless; savvy?

"Now listen. This is important if true—but it's a mooted question with these gazumps whether I can or not. If I can, that makes me a favorite fair-haired child of Datto Lunga and above all with old Ali, his holy man and chief precinct organizer. Ali is as anxious to put me across as you and I are to be home feeding the calves back in the United States or up in Luzon.

"Now follow me closely. You put in a kick that you can't be bothered with having a raving Mohammedan in the same cell with you. Too much talk about the green banner and pilgrimages to Mecca and such like. Besides that, you say, he's crazy as a bat and spirits talk with him in the night.

"Well, when you speak of spirits talking to me, what will these guys say? Why they will come right back and ask what spirits and how? Don't you see? And you say:

" 'Last night I heard a deep voice from his bunk speak out clear and loud:

" 'You can't talk to me. I will have word with Datto Lunga, who doubts me. Put him near the box that we may converse.' "

"Then you tell 'em that I groaned and came back with:

" 'No, no; they doubt me too. It is fated that through Datto Lunga's stupidity the cause of the prophet shall go blooey in the land."

"That is all you say, beside yammering to be taken out and executed. I'll do the rest."

In the course of time and after much instruction coupled with dire threats Mundo had absorbed enough of the lines allotted to him to make the success of his part of the venture fairly assured. The next task was the harder. It consisted simply of standing by, waiting for somebody in authority to show up.

That did not happen until the following afternoon. The personage was Ali Goka himself. He came shortly after the couple had finished a scant meal of bamboo shoots, stewed rice and curdled milk from the water buffalo.

THE holy man, it turned out, also was intensely anxious about the outcome of this particular conference. There were beads of sweat on his brow, and his yellow fingers worked nervously. He had just received the jolt of his career. Briefly, his situation was this:

Lunga had not been able to gather about him all the fanatics he felt he should have to put over a successful coup. He well remembered seeing a "bullet-proof" shirt lying in the dirt outside of Malabang during the first great rebellion, and there was a dead Filipino inside of it. Others saw and remembered the same spectacle. They wanted proof. He must convince beyond peradventure the twoscore followers who had promised to stand by him, and send them abroad with the tidings. Nothing less would create the winning mood in the minds of the faithful.

On the other hand, already he had gone far enough to jeopardize his liberty if the matter reached the ears of the American authorities, military or civil. He had just laid the dilemma he was in directly at the door of his high priest who had urged him to take the field.

"Produce an interview between me and Mohammed in front of my assembled troops," was his ultimatum, "or stand up before them while the infidel, Mundo, bounces the bullets of an Army rifle off your especially protected body."

So Ali Goka bowed solemnly to the American and gave the Filipino a bland smile.

"Peace be with you!" he murmured. "I come in friendship. Let us counsel together."

Mundo began to unburden his mind rapidly, while Nugent pretended to sulk.

The Tagalog wanted the mad American removed. Last night the *Americano* had enjoyed extended converse with a saint of the Mohammedan church—a dead one, whom he had called to life. There was a deal of banter back and forth between them, which was debasing to a good Christian to listen to. Much rather would he, Mundo, submit to an immediate decapitation than sit up another night in such company.

Ali listened gravely, nodding his approval.

"It shall be as you wish," he said finally. "I shall have a bolo man dispatch you within the hour."

Nugent looked up from his sulks and sneered.

"Nix!" he exclaimed. "No such sneaking away for him this trip. Why, that guy is half-Mohammedan right now. There's no telling what I can do to him if I get my jawbone to working in good shape. I don't want him killed a-tall."

"That too shall be granted," replied Ali smoothly, anxious to please both parties. "I come in peace and friendship. What further can I promise?"

"Only this, holy one," rumbled Nugent, registering extreme piety. "Let me have access to the little box I spoke to you about yesterday. I desire to have a few words with one who is far away. One who is as powerful, under the circumstances, as the Prophet which we set so much store by."

He was thinking of Clockface Hennessey at Las Pinas, which, according to his reckoning, must be well within range; but another inference was open to his visitor.

"Who else," thought the priest, "but Abdullah, the Prophet's secretary?"

"I know little of thy celestial correspondent," lamented Ali. "But as he is the one you say keeps in touch with things mortal, he indeed must be mighty among the angels. Therefore I shall consider and decide presently."

The priest thereupon proceeded to mull the matter over in his crafty mind, squatting in the center of the hut and rolling a cigaret in yellow, sentient fingers that still shook nervously. Evidently he had come to a place in the road where he must impose the utmost confidence in his auditors.

"That is it!" he reflected. "They can make it appear that a miracle has been performed. I promise them safety, pigs, wives—anything! Fair enough. Afterward I may reconsider. Excellent thought!"

Ali turned glowing eyes toward the captives and stroked his beard.

"Listen," he commanded impressively, his voice running off into a sort of chant. "I am Ali Goka, the wise, the holy one, the favored of Allah and a loyal son and true follower of the Prophet. When I raise my hand thus, there is peace and harmony between the Faithful and the infidel. When I shake my head so, there is discord and fighting. For all men even unto the ends of the earth respect my wisdom and holiness. Is it not so?"

He was looking at Nugent, and the soldier answered promptly.

"You put it too modestly," he said. "I'll agree with you if you'll hand me one of them cigarets."

Ali Goka grimaced and handed them over.

"It is known to every one then," he continued, "that the Prophet appeared to me while I was at prayer and made me immune from the bullets of infidels. He even blessed my sarong to the purpose that it will turn a thrown javelin as an acorn glanceth from the back of a carabao and doeth no injury."

"My faith in the potency of the blessed sarong is supreme," he went on, bidding for sympathy; "but that of Datto Lunga is very, very weak and unworthy. He demanded a public test. I am much cast down, for I must refuse. It would be blasphemy!"

"It would be worse than that; it would be murder," declared Nugent bluntly. "How can we help you out?"

The seer turned an inquiring gaze on Mundo.

"Tell me, infidel," he queried, "do you shoot exceedingly well?"

"I am very expert with the rifle," returned the Filipino correctly interpreting a wink from his cellmate. "I may be counted upon to hit my target."

Ali groaned.

"I think," said Nugent, "that our friend Mundo here might develop unsteady nerves if I could be allowed to work on him a few days; but just now I wouldn't risk a good sarong on him. Think up something else."

"There is little else," sighed Ali, "unless the Prophet deigns to visit our camp and repeat his promise to Datto Lunga. If thy speaking box which sends and receives messages from afar can communicate with the Abdullah you mention, all yet will be well. But Lunga declares the people will not rise without a miracle they can see or hear. It must either be a word direct, he says, or—this infidel must be allowed to shoot at my body, which Allah forbid!"

"Not to be considered for a second," agreed Nugent. "Get the *datto* to prepare his message and let me sit at my radio set and I will swear by the skull of Clockface Hennessey that I'll raise the Prophet or I'll raise —— with the luminiferous ether. Take it from me, old boy, and do your stuff!"

"And then," promised Ali solemnly, "you may finish running amuck."

"And then," retorted Nugent, "I'll run my legs off until I get out of this mess, you can bet on that."

Such part of his plans as would best suit his needs the truculent Ali communicated to the *datto*. They were accepted by him at pretty nearly their face value in whatever units propaganda is measured in. As to the religious significance of the tests, Lunga had a latent doubt because of a stubborn Oriental notion that nothing spiritual could come out of a Westerner. However, he could not get along without a miracle, and it might happen. *Quien sabe?*

There were in Lunga's camp two educated Moros who had become expert telegraph operators but who knew little or nothing about radio excepting the code, which they had mastered very well.

Lunga called these two men to him and ordered them to translate instantly what passed between Nugent and the Prophet or the Prophet's secretary.

"How about the call-letters?" inquired Mendoza, the more experienced operator of the twain. "If this man uses one he might betray us by calling a military station."

"True," agreed the *datto*. "But the Prophet, being all-knowing, will require no call-letter. That part of it I shall prepare. For the rest we need not be alarmed, for it is plain that if only the Prophet is called, only the Prophet can answer."

At that very moment Nugent was mapping it all out in his own mind differently.

"Clockface is a good old soul," he was thinking. "I know his wave-length and he knows my sending like a book. If he hears me batting out long-winded phrases to some Moro saint he'll come back right *pronto* with a message in kind, pretending to be the Prophet himself. That'll fix me *mucho grande*. Good old Clockface! The very man to make a buddy of in a pinch. He'd never fall down on the job in a thousand years."

To Mundo Nugent stated a part of his plan.

"Old horse," he chortled flippantly, "we're just as good as out of this pickle-jar if you keep your coconut working. Otherwise my head will be looking at yours from the top of a pole before the sun sets, and our respective, if not respectable, bodies will be nowheres in evidence. Mind your ears while I slip you the dope.

"When they brought me into these diggings I looked around, and I saw two things. One thing I saw was a radio set—pack, hand generator, complete with tripod and spare parts. That, I thinks, gives me communication with an old friend on the outside—I speak of that sterling soldier and profound diplomat, Clockface Hennessey of Las Pinas."

"Know what's at Las Pinas besides Clockface?" he queried confidentially. "The mounted constabulary!

"Now! I saw another thing. It was two iron cylinders, part of the loot of the Malabang constabulary school. They are teaching the police down there the use of a Dutch-invented, and consequently Christian and humane, agent of modern warfare known as poisonous gas."

"It wouldn't do, of course," he explained wisely, "to let them googoos monkey with the real article. So they send 'em iron tanks filled with what they call 'tear gas.' Makes you weep so you can't see anything but the brine, but don't do any other damage that I can see.

"I want them two tanks near me when I operate the set; savvy? You stand around with your finger in your mouth until I yells, 'Bring me two variable condensers.' Then you roll them up to the set so I can sit on 'em. If the worst come to the worst I'll open the cocks, and you grab a bolo from somebody, and we'll make a break for it.

"But don't worry; it won't come to that," he concluded confidently. "Old Clockface will catch on. Before our friend in need, Ali the Merciful, changes his mind, the constabulary will be sawing off the *datto's* ears with their bayonets."

NUGENT and his cellmate were released from confinement at about four o'clock. It took the old M. S. E. just twenty minutes to find the various parts of the radio set, erect the antennæ and test for adjustment. But he wasted half an hour more looking over the loot from the constabulary training-school, ostensibly to find something to sit on.

At his heels trotted a swarthy bolo man, fingering his ugly weapon yearningly, ready to dismember the lanky soldier at the first gesture of impatience from Datto Lunga. Two other Moros, dressed American fashion and wearing soiled linen sport collars, lingered in the vicinity, watching every movement with critical eyes. Nugent looked up finally and grinned at them in a most comradely manner.

"Would you lookee here?" he invited. "Just what I wanted! I can see that you boys are expert radio operators, attached to the *datto's* own staff," he explained glibly, "so I'll be obliged to you if you will help me bring these here parts up to the set."

The alleged experts were overjoyed.

Nugent tapped his bare toes against a couple of mysterious-looking cylinders, half-buried in the pile of stolen equipment.

"Variable condensers of great power. Wouldn't that bring tears to your eyes!"

The tubes were marked "Lachrymal" in plain red letters which didn't mean anything to the Moros.

Willing hands carried the set box and the hand-generator to an especially selected spot near the only trail out of the crater. A mast was erected. Nugent, very mysterious and highly technical, studied the outfit with appraising eyes.

"There is one thing more that must be done," he observed to Ali Goka, testing for wind-direction. "I want every man Jack here to bunch up so that breeze will blow off this here box right in their faces."

"Now, Mundo," he commanded, "bring them variable condensers. The miracle-working is about to proceed."

Lunga explained in guttural Arabic, which is the base of the Moro tongue, what it all meant, while Nugent received final instructions from Ali about how he was to begin. He nodded pleasantly and motioned to a couple of scowling natives to begin grinding on the generator crank.

The Moro telegraph operators squatted beside him, receivers to their ears, eyes on the key, their diligent fingers recording on scraps of wrapping-paper the words transmitted, which one of them immediately read aloud. Mundo had taken his place beside the men at the crank in order to keep them going at an even rate of speed.

"Datto Lunga to the most high and holy Prophet of all Islam, through his recording angel, Abdullah," intoned Ali.

And Nugent broke sputtering into the ether.

> Datto Lunga has been informed by his faithful and zealous follower, Ali Goka, who also is a true priest and upholder of the doctrine of Islam—a wise and holy man who is renowned for his piety throughout the world—that certain promises and pledges were made to him, the said Ali. Now of these Datto Lunga would speak, believing firmly that they were given, but wishing to receive it as a mark of confidence from the Prophet himself and to bring conviction to the hearts of his people. In other words, O mighty Prophet, and O wise and efficient Abdullah, his recording angel, the Datto Lunga, who is about to engage in an enterprise for the extension of Islam, desires a word of confirmation of what already has been said to his servant and high priest, Ali. I have said, and I await the answer.

A nerve-racking silence fell upon the ranks of faithful. Nugent was perspiring almost as much as the crank-turners as he repeated the message word for word. The executioner began to fidget with his blade. He seemed to be the only one who was thoroughly anxious that the demonstration fail.

Then there came a slight whir and a click in the headphones. Hennessey at last was getting ready to respond. He was in fact responding. The words tripped joyfully over each other with staccato regularity:

> The Prophet is on the job, although hot as the —— and expecting a typhoon. Abdullah has gone out into the garden to dig some Murphies for dinner, and the harem is raising —— because I've had to move them out to make room for a bevy of new fighting-cocks. It is Mohammed himself at the key. How is Trix?"

The secondary battery of telegraphers took it entire and translated it with amazement written all over their faces. Ali began to look dismayed, Lunga perplexed and disgusted. For a dramatic second his beady eyes fastened upon the executioner, and it seemed that he was about to speak the word; but his seer restrained him.

"Let the *Americano* explain," he urged gently. "I doubt not it is indeed the Prophet who speaks thus strangely in parables."

Nugent blessed him with an admiring look and rose to the occasion manfully.

"I'll tell you how it is," he lied glibly. "Mohammed has a way about him that is very keen. He beats around the bush a lot, and I don't get him very well myself. But my old friend Ali there can understand him right along. Ali will give you the dope after we get through talking."

"But Trix?" objected the *datto*.

"Oh, Trix!" repeated Nugent after him with a hollow laugh. "Of course you want to know who Trix is."

He was thinking fast.

"Trix," he said, "is the short and sweet for Trixiania, the seventh daughter of the Prophet's seventh sister, Kate, known in the Koran as Katoosha. Trix was sent back to earth to do penance for indiscretions done in the spirit. She will leave our midst presently, and the Prophet is asking about her health. I guess she holds some position or other in his household."

"Do you know of her then?" inquired the *datto*.

"Oh, yes; by hearsay only."

"How is this?" demanded Lunga of Ali Goka.

"The story is well known as he tells it, invincible leader," replied Ali swiftly. "He should tell the Prophet that which he has learned concerning the woman."

"Go on then," ordered Lunga.

Nugent returned to his key. He rapped out with old-time vim:

> Trix is in the midst of thine enemies. The powerful and kind old Uncle should command his hosts to come and relieve Trix. Trix is worrying a lot because Trix is surrounded by the heathen and may not get by for more than an hour or two.

He broke off and waited. After what seemed to be an interminable wait Hennessey replied:

> Say, old pal! You've been nipping the bottle again. If there's snakes in your boots and pink alligators and red-white-and-blue monkeys in your barracks, try drinking a seltzer and going to bed right off with an ice-pack. That's what I would do in your fix.

The chief made an impatient gesture; but Nugent, now fairly beside himself with anger at his erstwhile friend of the departmental net, held up an arresting forefinger. If he was to continue to live he must invent a better delusion to kill time.

"Steady! Steady! The real message and answer to all your problems is about to come," he shouted breathlessly. "Get set for the miracle! I don't quite get his drift; but he's coming this way and will speak to you man to man in two minutes. His words are getting closer and closer all the time."

He was playing for time in dead earnest; not that he entertained any hope of rescue, but because he had taken a sudden feverish notion that he would like to live out the day.

With a powerful effort he turned the cocks on the cylinders until they were almost open. The effect of his words was apparent. The excitement among the Moros was now almost volcanic. Sarong after sarong was stripped from their oily bodies and spread in front, so that no time might be lost in saluting the apparition upon its arrival. Even Lunga did this. Mundo licked his lips and made the sign of the cross.

Again Nugent began to send. He hated to give up with the idea of Clockface turning him down that way. Maybe Hennessey would have figured out by this time something of the situation his old friend was in and would come back with a beautifully allegorical message full of hope and promise. So Nugent tapped out:

> What has the great and holy Prophet to say about the shirt? Inform thy servant Lunga at once if coming.

A mere subterfuge; but it brought this hair-raising rejoinder:

> To —— with Lunga and his shirt. The constabulary knows all about that guy. Two troops with machine guns left here this A.M. report him located in extinct volcano. Probably attacking now. Relay this to Zamboanga. Am going to mess. Good-by.—H. C. H.

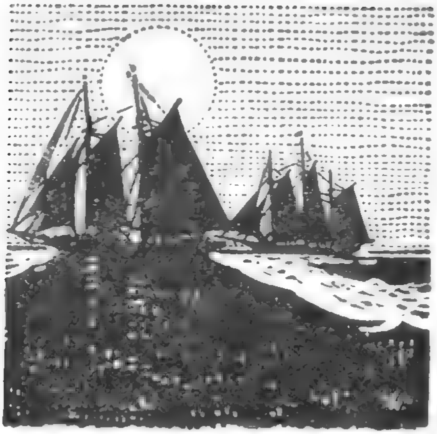
Mundo the Tagalog might not have been the first, by a matter of seconds, to comprehend the significance of this strange piece of news from out the blue; but he beat the others by approximately five heart-beats in acting on it. His right hand shot out with the speed and sureness of a snake striking from ambush and neatly extracted a short but cruelly sharp knife from the loin-cloth of one of the men at the crank. With precisely the same movement he let it slide through his hands, neatly severing the jugular vein of the headsman just as the latter leaped to his bloody task. At almost the same instant Nugent ducked his head and turned one cock after another on the cylinders under him.

As the twin streams of blinding gas hissed an invisible but effective wall between them and the screaming fanatics to windward they ran like two farmers chased out of a dairy by a mad bull.

An hour later Nugent, partly rehabilitated in borrowed clothing, was receiving the congratulations of a sunburned cavalry captain as they rode together at the rear of as mystified and sullen a band of captured hostiles as ever was taken without a shot anywhere and at any time.

"By the way," said the officer when he had garnered the complete narrative, "you certainly simplified matters for my constabulary. What are your plans for the future?"

"First," replied Nugent, "I'm going to get into my old uniform. Next I'm going to 're-up' in the best outfit in the best Army in the whole world. And finally," he concluded, "I'm figuring on taking a furlough and hiking over to Las Pinas where I'm going to beat the living tar out of Clockface Hennessey, the cock-eyed son of a gun."



BELOW THE SURFACE

A Complete Novelette

By

Garrard Harris

Author of "White Eye."

BUSINESS of building railroads and bridges took John Reagan to China. With him went his wife and five year old son, Thomas Jefferson. Young Reagan possessed red hair, a bump of inquisitiveness and a capacity for devilment which had the whole ship's crew on the verge of nervous prostration by the time port was reached.

There was a residence of something more than a year in Pekin, where Tommy was schooled at the mission kindergarten. He chummed with the Chinese boys, picking up some of their lingo and getting along famously, but bossing them, always. Then two years at Kaiochow, with more mission schooling and progress in Chinese dialect; a year and a half at Hankow; another period at Canton, and finally permanent residence in Hong-kong where the elder Reagan went into business for himself.

When Tom was eighteen the elder Reagan died and the business went to pot. Tom obtained employment in the shipping department of a German export and import firm. There he remained until he was twenty-one, when his mother married an elderly Englishman Tom disliked acutely—and who was thoroughly unappreciative of Tom. Then soon after, opportunity knocked on the door.

"Say, young feller, know where I could pick up a purser?" inquired Captain Jared Watts of the American tramp steamer *Ulysses* as he was waiting for some shipping documents Tom was making out.

Tom inspected him carefully. Captain Watts was not by any means handsome, but he had a straightforward air about him and a weather-beaten countenance which was very likeable indeed.

"What's the matter?" cautiously inquired Reagan.

"Purser I shipped outbound at New York is a Britisher and he finds it so homelike here he's quitting to stay."

"What do you pay?"

"Seventy-five a month."

"Where you clearing for?"

"Shanghai, Nagasaki, Yokohama, Honolulu, Hilo, San Francisco, Panama, Kingston, Havana and New York."

"Think I'd do? I've never worked on a ship?"

"Don't see why you wouldn't. Work's right along the line of what you are doing here," encouraged Captain Watts.

"I've a good notion to go with you!"

"Meet me at the American Consulate at four o'clock and sign on!" commanded the captain, extending a brown hand.

They shook solemnly.

Tom Reagan stayed with the *Ulysses* two and one-half years, visiting many ports and lands. Then he regretfully parted company and went to work with a trading firm down near East River in New York City. There he remained two years, advancing rapidly from shipping clerk to manager in charge of the Oriental trade. His working knowledge of German and Spanish and a bit of French he had picked up in Hong-kong were all immensely valuable to him.

The World War came on. He at once

"Below the Surface," copyright, 192[illegible], by Garrard Harris.

volunteered—and after being generally analyzed and inspected, was assigned to the military intelligence section. To his intense disgust he was kept on this side of the water. Swallowing his chagrin at not being allowed to go with a fighting outfit, Tom threw his whole heart into the work, doing valuable service and earning many commendations.

When the war ended Reagan knew he had found his real vocation. Never again could he be willing to spend his days tamely higgling over details of shipments concerning coffee, cacao, copra, spices and such stuff. He was at heart a hunter engaged in the highest form of the sport—that of matching wits with men. It was an all-absorbing game with him, to out-think and out-act them.

The chief of Tom's bureau knew him and his record, so, when in the military demobolization process Reagan was reached, the Intelligence Division of the Department of Justice bid eagerly for his services. He was one of the most promising of the younger men the war had developed.

One day Tom was over at Baltimore, a witness in the Federal court on an alien property case. While waiting to be called, in company with another operative he strolled into the immigration officer's quarters where a hearing was being held in an effort to deport a Chinaman accused of being unlawfully in the country.

The interpreter was an Americanized Chinaman who put the questions of the government attorney to the stupid-looking Celestial in the witness box, and translated his reply.

"Ask him where he got the certificate he claims to have lost, and when?" inquired the government attorney.

The interpreter, Moy Sing, rattled off something—the accused came back with more of the same—then both talked at once. It sounded like a pack of firecrackers exploding under a tin bucket.

"He say he got slifikit in Flisco, June, 1902, under name Joy Lee because he owe money in China and no want 'em find um."

"Ah, ha——"

The attorney fiddled with his pencil, rather up a stump. The answer tallied with the certificate as to name and date.

"Mr. Commissioner, that interpreter lied; what the witness said was, 'Do you think I will get by?' and this interpreter said, 'Leave it to me—we are going to see you through,' and the man said, 'I am afraid,' and this interpreter said, 'Don't worry, these Americans are such fools it is child's play to put over something on them.' "

Tom Reagan's statement fell like a bombshell.

Moy Sing, the interpreter paled—and showed his discomfiture. Then he rallied suddenly and tried to laugh it off.

"Ho—velly funny—Melicans can't understand Chinee——"

"He was talking Cantonese," calmly replied Reagan.

"What business is it of yours? Keep out of this and we will make it worth your while!" ripped out Moy Sing.

Reagan translated, word for word.

Moy Sing, white with rage and chagrin, was sent out of the room in charge of a deputy marshal, and Tom was drafted as interpreter. The accused Chinaman saw something was wrong. He closed up like a clam and would say nothing except that he had obtained a certificate in San Francisco, and lost it.

The commissioner ordered him deported, and committed Moy Sing to jail for six months with a five hundred dollars fine additional.

Tom visited Joy Lee in the jail and endeavored to get something more out of him before he was taken away, but the man would not say a word. Then Tom tried to extract the information from Moy Sing as to whom he represented—for the smuggling of Chinese into the United States is one of the chief worries of the immigration service. Vast sums are paid by some of the Celestials to gain entrance into the United States.

Several other Chinamen came up to call on Moy Sing, conferred in whispers that Tom could not hear, and promptly produced the fine, but the jail term had to be served.

Reagan noted two of the visitors eying him curiously, and overheard a bit of conversation—switched this time to the lingo of North China, which Moy was sure Reagan could not understand.

"Watch that man—he is dangerous; he knows entirely too much—we must be very careful!" he admonished.

"I'll do a bit of keeping my eyes open myself!" thought Reagan, who stared blankly at the men as if he was dumfounded at the strange dialect.

"Pass the word on!" continued Moy to a

Chinaman who had a long scar diagonally running from chin to left ear, giving him a particularly sinister appearance.

The man shot a malevolent glance at Tom and gave a quick word of assent.

SEVERAL nights afterward, acting upon instructions to aid the distracted Federal authorities in curbing the influx of smuggled liquor from the Bahamas, Reagan took post on a part of the waterfront where it was thought cargoes would be landed. He was seated on a box, practising watchful waiting at one-thirty at night in the gloom of a long, ramshackle pier shed, unlighted save for two dusty incandescent lights at the street end, three hundred feet distant. He was absent-mindedly trimming a hangnail off his left forefinger, pocket-knife in his right hand.

Something soft as the flight of a bat whispered a brief instant past his ears, settled around him, and he felt it tauten and pinion his arms to his sides. At the same moment another noose of silken cord fell about his shoulders, and like lightning in its rapidity, grew taut on his neck.

With a forearm movement he cut the cord binding his arms; gasping for breath, he threw back his left hand, grasping the lead to the noose that was strangling him. He slashed behind him with his knife, and from the feel of the blade it encountered a hand as well as a silk rope.

He made another desperate lunge—the noose loosened, just in time, for things were turning black, shot with vivid flashes of red and green. Drawing a long, reviving breath, he furiously carried war to the enemy.

Both assailants were raining blows upon him with noiseless slung-shots—in the darkness and confusion hitting each other as often as their victim.

Reagan slashed, and one man fell backward with a cry, hands to face. Tom's left fist found lodgment against the jaw of the other who staggered backward—then both fled with noiseless footfalls.

He sent a fusillade of shots after them and blew his police whistle. In the gloom and gathering river mist as they rushed under the dim lights, he could see they were Chinese. He realized that some powerful Chinese organization engaged in importing their countrymen was after him to get him out of the way—as long as he lived he was a constant and dangerous menace to them. And but for a hangnail on his finger he would have been strangled, his skull crushed with the slung-shot and his body dumped into the water!

Two policemen finally came on a lumbering lope. One of them sprang his flash-light.

"Whatcher been doin'—tryin' to hang yourself?" asked the officer, pulling the noose from Tom's neck and eying it curiously. "By gum, you're fancy about it—got to have a silk cord to die with, hey?"

"No, couple of chinks intended that for me. Give it to me—I want it as a souvenir. That stuff is made in China just for strangulation purposes. The attack on me was carefully planned."

"Why the chinks after you?" puzzled the cop.

"I know too much."

"'S funny—chinks always scrappin' among themselves, but this is the first time I ever heard of 'em going after a white man?"

"Guess it's because I'm a sort of a Chinaman in a way. One of you fellows had better stick around here with me——"

"Both," urged the men. "Too dangerous along the waterfront for one man—anywhere."

"All right—let's get quiet now," suggested Reagan, shoving the silken noose, souvenir of his closest call, into his pocket and settling down to the vigil for the rum-runners who were expected some time before dawn.

II

"CHIEF wishes to see you."

Reagan picked up the memorandum from his desk when he reported back at headquarters in Washington. He had not alluded to his waterfront experience in Baltimore in his communications. It was all in the day's work; he was not killed and it was a mere incident he dismissed as of no particular importance.

"I'm afraid I'm going to be compelled to let you go, Reagan!" said the chief in a serious tone as Tom entered the office.

"Why—what's the matter?"

"That is—for a while," his superior added. "You are becoming too blamed popular with other branches. Immigration people tell me you are a regular Wu Ting Fang—I never knew you could handle laundry lingo!"

"Oh, that's nothing. Picked it up naturally as a kid—had to or I couldn't get along, but I really had to study on the German and Spanish."

"Well, Immigration says they need you—that you are the only man who can turn the trick for them. Guess we will have to farm you out to 'em."

"What's the job?"

"Seems that a regular sluice of chinks is slipping in and can't be stopped. Immigration people have a notion these Chinese are being landed somewhere down on the Gulf Coast and are distributed from there."

"I'm not so keen on that sort of work——"

"Big chance for you to win promotion, make a 'rep' and get more money. So, you just report over to the Immigration Bureau. Take your time—nothing doing here except routine stuff. I'd like to be located at New Orleans a while myself—noble eats there—best in the country."

After a lengthy conference with Immigration Bureau officials, New Orleans was advised that he would report for duty. He was to get his credentials and start for his new post within the next three days.

Leaving his new headquarters and walking slowly down Pennsylvania Avenue, past the White House and Treasury, Tom Reagan began making plans. He knew the literalness and fixedness of the Chinese mind, and the tenacity with which a Chinaman clings to that which he has accepted. Undoubtedly, word had gone out among the organization engaged in smuggling or harboring unlawfully entered Celestials to be on the lookout for a stocky young man with dark crinkly red hair, sandy eyebrows and a somewhat freckled face. They would all be on guard against such an individual—but, would they suspect a man with brown hair and eyebrows and no freckles? He knew they would not.

Continuing down the Avenue to Twelfth Street, he turned to the left and up beyond F Street found the place he sought. It was a fashionable beauty parlor where he had often observed equipages of the rich and socially prominent standing in front. Tom figured that a place of the sort would be able to do a better job than a barber shop, where such work was infrequent.

The proprietor evinced no surprize at the order and asked no questions, but turned Reagan over to a woman operative, who started to work in a business-like way. First treatment on bleaching out the freckles was started, and Tom sheepishly purchased a bottle of the stuff to keep his complexion on the mend. When he was delivered out of the hands of the specialist and looked in a mirror at himself he felt almost as if he ought to be introduced. The freckles were faded so as to be almost imperceptible. The brown hair and eyebrows so completely changed him that in his professional judgment, recognition would be an impossibility.

A new hat and outfit of clothes aided in sinking his former identity; then, with that sort of sixth sense of caution which had proven its value to him many times before, he telephoned headquarters that he would not come there at all, but would short-circuit possible watchers by transacting the rest of his business with the Bureau by telephone.

He had headquarters wire the official in charge at New Orleans to meet him at the Battle House at Mobile, so that spies at the New Orleans end could not connect him with the service. Then he packed his bags and started South.

In his room at the hotel in Mobile the New Orleans chief related the long and fruitless fight waged by that office.

"It's the most baffling proposition we have ever encountered," said the official. "All along the coast, here at Mobile, at Pensacola, Gulfport, Biloxi, Lake Charles, Port Arthur, even at Galveston and Tampa, Florida, we have been occasionally catching a Chinaman, but more often hearing of stray ones coming in off oyster luggers, the red-snapper fleet, and shrimp schooners. These people are all coastwise vessels and they have been picking these chinks up somewhere——"

"How about the overseas vessels making New Orleans?"

"Not a chance for them to get in that way."

"Well—you go over and arrange for me to show up for duty as an employee of the prohibition enforcement crowd. That will give me opportunity to get well acquainted with the waterfront, study the vessels coming in and so on, and never be identified with immigration. I'll give your place the absent treatment strictly and deal with you over telephone, by memo, or meet only when it is absolutely necessary. I'll loaf along the coast here for a few days and see if I can pick up a trail."

"That's a pretty good idea," assented the official.

"I'm sure this thing is bigger than you suspect. I believe a large, very powerful, very suspicious and entirely unscrupulous organization is behind this importation of Chinamen, and they would not stop at anything—murder least of all," continued Tom Reagan reflectively. "I do know that Chinamen are willing to pay and have been paying from five hundred dollars to two thousand dollars to get into this country, depending on the family wealth, savings and ability to pay—and it is enormously profitable to somebody."

"All right—handle it your way. I'll look for you when I see you—or hear you. Meanwhile I'll make the arrangements you suggest."

"Well—perhaps I can get a line on something by going over the territory between Mobile and New Orleans carefully," said Reagan. "I'll get on the job right here."

His credentials as an agent of the Department of Justice procured him entrance to the county jail at Mobile and the right to talk to the captain of a shrimp schooner incarcerated there charged with illegally landing two Chinese, who were also being held for deportation.

"Swelp me, I never knowed them chinks was wrong!" complained Captain Malpis to Reagan who passed him a cigar and casually inquired what he was in for.

"That's too bad," sympathized Reagan.

"I comes in from down beyond Ship Island with forty barrels of swimps for the Bayou la Batre Cannery, and 'bout a mile off the bar, outside Fort Morgan, a power schooner hails me. The cap'n says his chink cook from Nyaw 'Leens is took sick all of a sudden with 'pendicitis an' got to see a doctor, quick, an' he can't bring that Chinaman in, as the boat's under charter at Pensacola to load lumber for Haiti and she's two days overdue. So he offers me fifty dollars to bring this cook and his brother up the bay—his brother was a hand on the schooner.

"I jumps at the chance—I was comin' up this way anyhow. The cap'n said them two chinks had been with him for years an' lived in Nyaw 'Leens an' was all right an' reg'lar, so I takes the fifty an them two ——ed chinks. One of 'em kept bellerin' till I told him I'd bust his head with a mop handle if he didn't hush. That was the one what said he had the bellyache.

"When I lands down at the fish wharf they scrambles off—all the 'pendicitis seems to have vanished of a suddent. There was another daggone chink hangin' 'round there to meet 'em—they has a big gabfest an' while it's going on a coupla debbity marshals pinches them an' me—and here me and them is!"

"I think they put something over on you," consoled Reagan.

"Looks powerful like it," agreed Captain Malpis gloomily.

"I think you'll come out all right—your story sounds straight——"

"If I ever do get out, I'm a' goin' to comb this here Gulf until I find that there ——ed dago cap'n. And then, the sharks will have a meal that tastes like garlic."

"Ever see that boat before?"

"Yes, sir, lots of times. She's been carryin' lumber coastwise, mostly, making these smaller ports, and into Nyaw' Leens. Three master, with gasoline auxiliary."

"Remember her name?"

"Dago kinda name—*La Paloma*. Dago lookin' crew."

"Well, luck to you!"

Tom presented him with another cigar, and moved over to be in earshot of the two Chinese, who did not open their mouths for half an hour.

He was afraid to speak to them, for the unusual occurrence of a white man speaking their language would soon be conveyed to the outside and spread far and wide among their countrymen. So few whites can handle the lingo that Tom knew it would be only a few days until he was spotted by the very ones he wished not to suspect him. Still, the temptation to pump them was great—but it would end his usefulness—and he passed the opportunity.

At Gulfport, Reagan stopped off and interviewed the United States Commissioner. Four men were under bond there to answer charges for illegally bringing in Chinese. Stenographic notes of the commitment hearings revealed cases very similar to that which landed Captain Malpis in the Mobile jail. There was mention of the *La Paloma* in two cases; two others described a vessel which might have been *La Paloma*, except they were positive her name was *El Parajo*, and not provided with auxiliary power.

"Suppose that gang has two boats unloading Chinese east of the Mississippi, and other craft west, or even only two boats in all—just think of the number of Chinese they must have smuggled into smaller ports where there are no Federal authorities," suggested Tom Reagan. "The thing's tremendous!"

"How long it has been going on, goodness only knows," replied the commissioner. "It looks to me like the big problem is not to catch the distributors, but to stop the means by which these Orientals are being brought over here."

"You've hit it exactly—that is the main job."

Tom showed up at the prohibition enforcement offices next day and was assigned at his request to one of the inspection squads visiting incoming ships.

Half an hour later he was aboard a steamer just docked. She was from Havana. He followed the squad about over the vessel, noting the thoroughness of their search. Not a nook or cranny where contraband could possibly be concealed was overlooked. Even the coal-bunkers and fresh water tanks were searched, and every dark recess of the hold. Not a bottle was found, and certainly no Chinamen.

Several other vessels, arriving within the next few days, were visited by him with the inspectors, and two things became convictions in his mind; that no appreciable amount of contraband liquor was arriving in reputable ships which came to piers along the waterfront. Perhaps half a dozen or so bottles might be smuggled through by the wit of some crew member, but none in quantity. It was an absolute certainty that the Chinamen were not coming in on these vessels.

Some other avenue of entry was being used. Tom set himself to the task of finding out just what it was.

III

THERE is a considerable Chinese colony in New Orleans. Many natives of that city have not taken kindly to the steam laundries and still patronize the Chinamen. There are other Chinese operating curio stores over in the old French Quarter, a few selling edibles and delicacies peculiar to the Celestial taste.

Over across the Mississippi River, behind the little railroad terminal and ferry towns of Algiers and Gretna, are still more of the race, engaged in truck farming. They bring their products across the river and sell them to the stall keepers at the old French Market, or Poydras Market, or else to dealers in lettuce, radishes, young onions and the like which are shipped out of New Orleans in quantity the year around.

Tom Reagan visited all the curio stores, looking about and making unimportant purchases, killing as much time as possible and listening intently where two of the Chinese engaged in conversation. Not a clue did he get.

He divided his clothing in four different bundles and took the wash to as many different laundries. He hung about as a gaping sort of mildly interested American, asking fool questions and endeavoring to engage the laundrymen in conversation. He got very little of anything out of them in English, but often heard most uncomplimentary references to himself passed upon him in the native tongue to other workers.

He had absolutely nothing to go upon, after all the Chinese gabble he had heard, until one day away down on Conti Street in an old, dilapidated building of French Colonial days, in a laundry he glimpsed a face that was familiar.

It was the scar-faced Chinaman he had last seen in the jail at Baltimore—but the scar upon his cheek was now crossed by a new one—its livid line attesting its recent receipt.

"Aha, my friend of the Baltimore pier!" thought Tom. "And I put that mark on him. There's something doing—or he would not be down here!"

To test his disguise Tom lounged around the front and tried to be jocular with the owner of the laundry. The Chinaman with the scar apparently was not working in the laundry—he wore his hat and street clothes. He cast an indifferent, contemptuous glance toward Tom and walked back into a little room at the rear.

The owner of the laundry was surly, and remarked to his helper that some of these Americans were the greatest fools in the world and he would like to take a stick and run this pest away.

Not a word was said that would give any sort of clue upon which to act. Reagan hung about the neighborhood until late that night, but no Chinaman came from the old three story rookery. His Baltimore friend was evidently keeping out of sight as much as possible.

Tom came back next day with another shirt and two more collars, and hung around the front of the laundry as long as he dared—with nothing to reward him for his time and trouble.

Next morning before day he dressed and went down to the famous Lugger Landing where the boats laden for the French Market unload. A half dozen or more Chinese from the west side of the river were there, unloading their cargoes of truck. They were all too busy to talk much among themselves—except to quarrel a bit. They were hardworking, simple fellows, and Reagan was sure they were not concerned. Nothing rewarded his visit to the Lugger Landing, but after having breakfast in the French Market with two cups of the wonderful Creole coffee sold there, he took the ferry over to Algiers, and struck out behind the town toward the truck farming region.

A couple of hours' scouting around convinced him the country was too open and there were too few Chinese there for the prospects to be bright. He took the street car for Gretna, a couple of miles up the river.

To a confiding real estate agent he asserted he wanted to buy a truck farm, and would prefer to buy one a Chinaman had been working, because he had heard they always brought the soil up to a high state of cultivation.

The agent enthusiastically set out to visit a number of the places and Tom got a very good idea of the hinterland behind the river in the vicinity of Algiers. Also he decided that these Celestials were in reality truck farmers and probably concerned not at all in the smuggling operations.

Still further up the river above Algiers was Westwego. The real estate man confided that there were two or three Chinese up that way, but they were back in the swamps and edges of the swamp, and it was too far to get stuff to market. Tom came back to the city, went by the laundry where he had seen scar-face, and engaged in a stupid wordy argument with the laundry proprietor about the first package of garments, which was not ready.

Not even the row and noise of recrimination and expostulation brought any of the inmates to the front—and the man with the scar remained hidden, if he was there.

Another day spent pottering around and revolving the situation in his mind, convinced Tom Reagan of two things: that the waterfront would produce nothing in the way of results, nor the territory on the east side of the Mississippi River.

NEXT morning he was sitting in the Prohibition Office, poring over a large map of Louisiana, with particular attention to the district across the river from New Orleans, when a messenger came up-stairs for the keys to the storage rooms.

"Got a big truck load of fancy stuff down there," remarked the man.

Tom went down with the chief to see the captured contraband unloaded. The truck was piled high.

"Just look at that rum!" bitterly commented the chief. "Lot of it is coming in here, somehow. We are getting case after case of it, and I'm up a tree, I'll tell the world. How they get it in here in quantity is beyond me!"

Reagan inspected the cases. It was a brand of rum for which Cuba is famous over the world. The box had not even been opened. There were eight cases of that, several of the genuine imported Scotch in original cases, and a dozen or so cases of whiskey of recognized brands.

Back in the office Tom sat and heard more complaints as to Cuban rum—for the last six months it had been flooding the bootleg market. It set him to thinking. If rum could be run in by wholesale, why could not Chinamen be gotten in the same way?

There was no Chinese exclusion act in Cuba: Tom recalled the several times he was in Havana, Santiago, Matanzas and Cienfuegos on the *Ulysses*, he was struck with the number of Chinese in the cities and engaged in business.

That afternoon he started out on another line of investigation. Dressed in some old overalls and a second-hand hat, with a cheap cane fishing rod and a small pail of shrimp for bait, he started in just above the Canal Street wharf, and began to fish upstream, carefully and slowly. Next morning he began where he left off, observing the banks and surroundings and the neighborhood minutely. By night he had progressed beyond the city proper and was above the residence district of Carrollton.

The next day, by late afternoon he had gone far beyond the inhabited district, and was in a region of deserted old fields, thickets and some swamp a bit above and opposite the west-side terminals at Westwego.

He came upon tangled banks, willows growing in great profusion, and wild blackberry briers and weeds on the river side of the levee—that great dam of earth which rose twenty-three feet high parallel to the river, to protect the flat, low country from inundation in time of freshet.

Not a foot of the river bank escaped his search. He was almost ready to turn toward town when in a particularly thick clump of willows, with briers growing almost to the edge of the water, something attracted his attention.

It was evidence that a boat had been landing there many times. The imprints of her bow against the mud bank: the trodden condition of the bank, and abraded bark on a willow sapling with the same on another some thirty feet away, indicated that these trees had been used to fasten the boat to the bank, bow and stern.

If just an ordinary landing, Tom argued to himself, merely a bow line would be used, but if it was desired to fasten her for a considerable period of time, for instance, to unload cargo from her, the stern and bow lines would be used with her side close along the bank.

Just above the water-line there was a sort of shelf of land inside the levee, but also covered with a thicket of tall briers. A well-defined path led from the water's edge to the center of it. In this center the briers had been cut away and trampled down. From the opposite side of this brier-walled space there was another path, leading diagonally up the side of the levee.

Reagan followed it to the levee crown, then down on the other side, where in the fading light he could see the tracks of many automobiles, where they came in, circled and went out. His heart gave a great leap—his judgment had been vindicated!

Then, observing more closely, he noted a great many withered cabbage leaves, shattered leaves of lettuce, a few green onions, beets, and carrots, and such like débris scattered around over the ground.

Another cold trail! He had discovered a mare's nest! In the light of all this trash of vegetables, it was perfectly plain that the landing place was merely where truck farmers over above Gretna were bringing their produce across the river, loading it into trucks and market wagons, so as to reach the city by the back way, probably supplying outlying green-grocers, the smaller private markets and hucksters!

Disgustedly, Tom Reagan started tramping across the old field toward the Illinois Central Railway tracks a quarter mile distant intending to walk south on them a half mile and catch a Tulane Belt car.

Suddenly, that sixth sense of his impelled him to pause, stand irresolute, and start back toward the levee. He went down to the water's edge and inspected it carefully; then the landing place, the little arena in the blackberry thicket, and the path up over the crown of the levee and down to the loading place of the trucks and wagons.

Not a leaf or sign of any vegetable did he see anywhere—not one!

If vegetables were being unloaded in the quantity indicated by the spot on the landward side of the levee where the vehicles turned around, certainly it would have been impossible to take them from the boat, and bring them the hundred and fifty yards from the water's edge across the levee and down to the loading point without shattering or dropping a few leaves, at least.

He went over the ground again. The most minute search failed to reveal any indication that there had been any vegetables whatever on the river bank or inside the levee!

Reagan had a couple of sandwiches in his pocket; he picked out a place in the brier patch close to the landing, and by careful work managed to fix himself a sort of nest into which he could crawl like a rabbit. The place commanded a view of the landing spot, and was close enough for ordinary low conversation to be heard.

The hours dragged slowly by and finally dawn came, with no reward to him for his effort.

Tired and worn, he returned to the city, slept all day, and just about dark, took up his position again. Nothing resulted, but he doggedly determined to stick it out until the mystery of that lot of vegetable leaves was solved. Again he slept all day and came back at dusk. He had a sort of feeling that this time he was going to learn something.

ABOUT midnight from across the water came the muffled throb of a motor-boat, coming nearer, nearer, finally stopping just below where Tom lay concealed, deep in the tangle of briers. The stars were shining brightly, and the late moon was just rising in the last quarter. He could see very well.

"All right—shake a leg you fellows—gota make three more trips before day!"

A gruff, vibrant voice spoke, commanding in low tones as he fastened the bow-line to the willow Reagan had noticed, while another man was making fast alike from the stern. The boat was snugly moored alongside the bank, close up.

Wooden cases, with which Tom was familiar, were brought ashore and piled within five feet of him, in the cleared space. There were five men in the party.

"Take 'em over the top now?" inquired one of the men.

"No, wait until we get another load over and the first truck comes. It's safe here, but outside the levee there is always danger of somebody butting in."

Twenty cases in all were unloaded—a pretty good cargo for a motor-boat not large. Then she swung out and headed across the river again.

Tom's heart was beating fast—he had discovered the back door entrance the rum-runners were using—and it was wide open!

From what point on the other side of the Mississippi was the stuff coming? How was it getting away up there behind the city? Who was back of the organization? And might not the solution of the question as to how the liquor was getting in prove the key to the door of mystery which concealed the operators of the Chinese smuggling ring?

Tom determined to wait, and see the thing through. In about an hour the motor-boat returned from the other side of the river with twenty more cases. Directly there was a low whistle from the landward side of the levee.

"All right boys—get busy!" was the command.

Two men to a case of liquor—extra large cases of two dozen quarts each — were needed to carry the boxes up the steep incline over the levee crown and down again on the other side.

Reagan wormed as silently as a fox out of the brier-patch as they disappeared up the hill, and worked his way to the top of the levee a few yards distant. The tall growth of Bermuda grass and weeds concealed him, and he could see well enough. In the all-pervading quiet he could hear nearly everything that was said.

The cases were being piled on a dilapidated motor-truck such as market gardeners about New Orleans use. On the ground was a considerable quantity of vegetables, loose, and in bunches. When the forty cases were on the truck, they were covered with an old tarpaulin, and over that were piled lettuce, loose head cabbage, turnips with long tops, onions, beets, carrots. When the decorators had finished no more innocent appearing market gardener's outfit ever came from the vegetable district into Poydras Market.

"Hurry up, you guys, and get unloaded before the streets are full of people," commanded the man who had been giving orders, and who was addressed as "captain" by the men.

"Righto—le's go!" answered the driver of the truck, which moved off without lights down the dim trail which led across the old field toward the city.

Reagan slithered down the levee and back to his old place in the brier-patch and awaited the return of the motor-boat.

As the men tugged with the heavy cases, they were mainly silent. Another forty cases were loaded on another truck, and the captain ordered the driver to be on hand at the same time the next night. Then, the crew entered the boat and she chugged back across the Mississippi, just as the sky was beginning to show faint traces of dawn.

After a safe period of waiting, Tom trudged down the railroad tracks, caught an early car on the Belt and got home just as real day began.

He slept until noon, then went down to the office and held a long confab with the chief, who was high up for sending a squad out the next night and nabbing trucks, motor-boat and all the men concerned.

"No—don't do that," earnestly urged Tom. "If you did it would only be a temporary catch—just like nailing this stuff in the bootleg joints here. We want to find out how it is getting in?"

"I believe in nabbing 'em as fast as we get the evidence on em!" argued the official.

"If you make a move on this, you'll undo a lot of hard work on my part. Just lay off, and I think I'll get at the bottom of how it is getting in here, and we will stop it sure enough!"

"All right—it's your case, handle it your way."

"And if I should not show up for a while, don't worry. I'll take care of myself—and I'm going to get the goods on them!" advised Tom Reagan confidently.

"Good luck to you—we'll wait for word from you!"

IV

DOWN near the waterfront in a second-hand clothing store Tom Reagan picked out the most disreputable old clothes, shoes and hat he could find—and they were very disreputable indeed.

He bought a broken frying-pan from a junk dealer. With a tomato can full of lard, a small paper sack of corn-meal, some salt and sugar and coffee in separate packages and a loaf of bread, some fishing-lines and hooks and a bucket of bait, he took the street car to the Illinois Central crossing on Tulane Avenue, then struck out afoot for the appointed spot on the river bank.

Setting out three baited fish-lines, which he tied to overhanging willow branches, he cut a long willow pole, put a line on that and set it out right at the boat-landing.

Then he foraged along the banks until he accumulated a store of dry driftwood and plenty of dead twigs for kindling. Late in the afternoon there was a tremendous bite on the hook attached to the pole—so great was the strain the brittle willow cracked, and he seized the line in his fingers. Hand over hand he pulled in his catch—a catfish which would weigh every bit of eight pounds.

Having dressed his flapping quarry, with pocket-knife, he cut some fine steaks from the fish, hanging the rest of the carcass on a willow limb at the landing. He made a fire in the center of the trampled spot where the cases had been unloaded, then placed his broken frying-pan on the coals. By tilting it it held sufficient hot grease in which to fry the fish steaks. These, having been salted and rolled in the corn-meal, were soon a golden brown.

Dumping the shrimp out of the tin pail, he scoured it, filled it with water and set it on the fire. When the water was boiling, he proceeded to wash and scald out the tomato can in which he had brought the lard—thus giving him a cup. The refilled bucket was brought to a boil again, and his dime's worth of coffee dumped in, allowed to boil a moment, and then put aside to settle.

Then he proceeded to make a very hearty and hugely satisfactory supper. He ate every bit of the plentiful supply of flaky, delicious fresh fish, and about half the loaf of bread. Then to help keep his eyes open he drank nearly all of a quart of strong coffee.

Dusk was falling. Tom foraged along the bank, breaking willow twigs of leaves until he had accumulated enough of them to make a comfortable sort of bed. Piling some of the green stuff on the fire to act as a smudge during the hours he must wait until there were developments, he dampened his hands, got them dirty in river mud, mixed some soot and grease from the frying-pan, and proceeded to smear his face, neck and hair.

Then he stretched himself on his couch of willow leaves in the cleared space right at the landing and started in to fight mosquitoes until something else showed up.

Keyed up by the coffee and excitement, Reagan's sense of hearing became very acute, and his nerves taut as bow-strings.

After what seemed an age of waiting, broken only by the whispering voices of the river, or the lunge of some giant fish out in the water, Reagan heard that muffled beat of an approaching motor-boat.

The night was close, still, and cloudy. There were no stars nor the late, wan moon as on the previous night. The blackness was dense—thick. The boat was running without lights, and as she came closer to the eastern bank she slowed speed, and some one turned a flash-light on. She eased up to the landing-place.

"All right men, le's get busy!"

Tom recognized the voice of the man who had been called "captain" the night before. He was making fast the bow-line; another man hopped ashore to fasten the stern. The soft impact of his feet on the bank showed he was barefooted.

"Wow! ——! Whoo-ee! I'm snake bit!"

The second man screeched, sprang his flash-light and was hopping on one foot, examining the other.

The captain started toward him. His foot struck something which gave off a dull, metallic clang.

"What the ——'s this?" snarled the captain, as a beam of light revealed the old frying-pan.

"You dern fool, you stepped in the ashes of a fire here and got on a live coal!"

The captain began to laugh, as the other man, who was nursing his foot and uttering horrid imprecations on the person responsible for the fire, hopped about in pain.

Another man, moving about in the dark came in contact with the clammy carcass of the big catfish hanging from the willow, and slid into the edge of the river in his efforts to get away from its cold, sticky touch.

"Thunderation — somebody's camped here!"

The captain was searching about with his light, and finally threw it direct on the dirty face of Tom, who seemed sound asleep.

"Here he is!" exclaimed the burned one.

"Who?" exclaimed two others in chorus, who had come ashore, pistols in hand.

"A blamed dirty, greasy hobo!" diagnosed the captain.

"The son-of-a-gun!" remarked the man with the burned foot. "He sure needs a bath—le's throw him in the river?"

"Hey—get up from here and clear out!"

The captain stirred Tom none too gently with his foot. Tom sat up, yawned, blinked and stared foolishly.

"Watcher want?" he mumbled.

"Get the —— outer here—you're trespassing—that's what!" advised the captain.

"Yer a liar," calmly replied Tom. "This here river belongs to Uncle Sam, an' I've as good a right here as you."

"You get away from here or I'll bust you in the beezer!" advised the man with the burned foot, advancing.

"All right—commence!" jeered Tom. "Here I am—and I ain't goin' nowhere—and I'll be there at the scrap too!"

"Ain't you going?" inquired the man.

"Not a step—get the —— out of here yourself. I was here first."

"Le's knock him in the head an' throw his bloomin' carcass in the water?" suggested another man coming forward with a monkey-wrench.

Tom stepped forward, met him unexpectedly and planted a right arm swing on the point of his jaw. The man went down sprawling alongside the boat.

"All right now—next?" inquired Tom, producing an old butcher knife from inside his trousers' belt.

"Get back there, you fellows!" ordered the captain. "We don't want no noise and trouble an' fightin'. This bird is more than half right. Maybe we can use him. Where you from, 'bo?"

"Chi."

"What you doing here?"

"Tired of the country—hoofin' it to Orleans. Thought I'd catch a boat an' see South America."

"How come you over here?" suspiciously inquired the captain.

"Train crew run me off a few miles above here. I come over to get supper—I can always catch fish. See my rations hangin' up there behind you?"

The captain surveyed the catfish admiringly.

"Whatever you are, you're a fisherman! Want a job?"

"What doin', cap?"

"Hard work for a few hours—then lots of rest and good grub?"

"Whatcher pay?" inquired Tom indifferently.

"Two dollars a day and feed you."

"All right, you done hired a hand."

"Good—what's your name?"

"Tom Perry. Where's the job?"

"Right here—unloading stuff from this boat."

"I ain't no roustabout, but I'll try it. When does my pay start?"

"Oh, I'll start it yesterday, if it will put any pep in you?"

"Lead me to that work!"

There was a laugh—and the men buried all past suspicion and animosity and accepted him as one of the crowd.

Tom carried cases of liquor until he thought his back would break. He asked no questions, manifested no curiosity, and kept his mouth shut. Three boatloads were brought across, then the party embarked and started for the west side of the river.

"Ain't we goin' to work no more?" inquired Tom as they climbed the west bank and prepared to enter a motor-truck.

"Not tonight. Last shipment a hundred cases short," advised the leader, who Tom had learned was Captain Lott.

Reagan piled in the truck with them and the vehicle turned west through neighborhood roads, finally pulling in at a vegetable farm some three miles from the river. The truck was run under a shed near the house. The men descended, and struck out following a path for a couple of hundred yards which ended at a narrow, dark bayou, shadowed by great cypress trees, festooned with long garlands of gray Spanish moss.

Down a path for a hundred yards farther and there was a clumsy-looking, flat-bottomed old motor-boat, with two other wide flat boats attached to its stern.

All the party clambered aboard, the motor-boat was headed about, and with her tow trailing behind a start was made.

"Well folks, I'm goin' to bed!" remarked the man who desired to use the monkey-wrench on Tom.

He climbed into one of the boats being towed, which was about half-full of Spanish moss, making the finest sort of a bed. He sprawled luxuriously upon it.

"Me too!" echoed three others, and soon both trailers were occupied, leaving only Tom and Captain Lott on the motor-boat. Captain Lott ran the engine and steered.

From the long, dark bayou the boats emerged on a considerable body of water.

"This ain't the Gulf of Mexico, is it?" inquired Tom innocently.

"No—this is Lake Cataouache. Long way from the Gulf yet."

Tom dozed, took a nap, and awoke at dawn. The motor and her tow were leaving the lake, and Tom knew perfectly his whereabouts, due to his study of maps in the office. From Lake Cataouache the pass in which they evidently were traveling was called Bayou Couba, and it drained into a yet larger lake to the south. Sure enough, after a while they entered upon Lake Salvador.

Tom knew he could sleep for an hour or so at any rate before that body of water would be traversed, so he stretched himself out on a seat.. By the position of the rising sun he knew they were headed due south.

He awoke as they were going from Lake Salvador by way of Bayou Peru into Little Lake; and finally from Little Lake into a short, deep bayou which drained the whole system of inland waters into Barataria Bay.

The old tub of a motor-boat was most deceiving. In appearance it looked like an elongated scow, but its engine was a fine one, powerful and silent, and the boat was really well built, light, and with a draft of not over eight inches. The two trailers were on the same pattern—all made of cypress heart lumber, and the three of them capable of carrying an astonishing amount of freight, because they were so light and strong. Without doubt, they had been built for the very purpose, so they could traverse the shallow lakes above and negotiate the sharp turns of the bayous.

When the motor-boat emerged into Barataria Bay they cruised down along toward the eastern shore until they were close to the Gulf of Mexico.

There they hauled up alongside a long, ramshackle building which at the landward end rested upon a little spit or promontory in the bay. The other end was built on piles in what appeared fairly deep water. Tom knew at a glance what it was—an old, abandoned shrimp and oyster cannery.

"Well Tom—here we are at home, sweet home!" announced Captain Lott.

"I'm hungry, and sleepy an' dirty. I want to wash up an' eat an' sleep about a week."

Tom surveyed the place.

A man ran out on the long pier and heaved a line. The boats were made fast and the crew clambered out.

"We'll have plenty of grub directly—there's five or six tons of moss in there that makes the best bed in the world, and the cook will give you a cake of soap. Go to it!" advised Lott.

It was the cook who threw the line to the home-coming motor-boat. Apparently he was the only one left at the place while the tow-boat was transporting stuff up to be delivered at the city.

The shore end of the old cannery, behind a partition, was the kitchen and dining-room combined, from which most savory and tantalizing odors were floating.

Tom obtained a cake of soap, a bucket and a towel and the cook directed him to a fresh water spring not far from the back door, where the grease and dirt were removed from Tom's person. As he returned to the quarters, Captain Lott was standing in the back door.

"Just looking for you—gosh, what a change that soap and water makes! You certainly were one dirty specimen," he suggested.

"Yep—I know it: glad to get it off."

"Hey, cook, when do we eat, and what you got?" inquired Lott.

"Come on now; got swimp gumbo, an' one redfish *courtbouillon*—ver' fine—*riz à la Creole*—some venison steak——"

"Shut up, before I bite a piece out of

you—come on, Tom, pitch in—I'm starving, me!"

Captain Lott seated himself and went to work on the appetizing viands. Tom did the same, and the rest of the hungry company came trooping in.

Never in his life had Tom Reagan tasted better food, seldom as appetizing. Lott explained that Pierre, the cook, was a native Baratarian—a Creole raised in the fishing settlements along the bay where sea-food is the principal diet, along with black coffee, and he knew all the arts of Creole cookery.

"I give you venison steak an' venison pot roas' *aux fine herb'* for supper," Pierre proudly confided to his guests at the table. "One feller, he come wiz *ze pirogue* of moss to sell, an' he have one deer he keel, an' I buy heem."

The announcement was received with great enthusiasm. It meant a meal fit for a king—and the men Pierre had to feed were always hungry.

"We buy this Spanish moss from the natives," explained Lott to Tom. "We pay our rent to that dago up at the terminal where the truck is, in that way."

"What do they do with the moss?" he inquired.

"Soak it for a few weeks in water; then all that gray fur comes off and it looks like curled horsehair. Mattress factories pay good prices for it. Louisiana folks would rather have a moss mattress than any other kind—they are fine."

After dinner the men flung themselves upon the piles of raw moss out in the warehouse and slept. Tom was instantly in the depths of sleep, for he had lost much rest and endured harder work than he had ever experienced. It seemed hardly a moment until Pierre was shaking him to come to the toothsome supper waiting.

Another wonderful meal to which Tom did full justice, and he was ready to go to bed again. The cool salt breeze right off the Gulf of Mexico produced an opiate drowsiness he could not resist.

"You birds better get all the sleep you can," advised Captain Lott. "You won't get any tomorrow night or the night after—that's a cinch!"

As Tom Reagan slipped off into slumber he felt this meant that important business was on hand, and he was vastly nearer to the solution of one phase of the problem he had set out to master.

V

A NEXT day the crew loafed about, fishing from the long pier, smoking and playing cards. Reagan got along with them very well indeed, because he asked no questions, and took everything with great good humor. The other men in turn manifested slight curiosity about him, for which he was duly thankful. It seemed to be a part of the code of ethics not to ask personal information, as it was in the early days of the West.

Occasionally a Creole would come along with a *pirogue* full of moss to sell. The cargo was always purchased. Some brought vegetables and fruit in addition to the moss, and these were taken also: several brought squirrels and fish. Certainly, there could be no complaint as to food with Chef Pierre providing and Captain Lott giving him *carte blanche* to buy all offerings.

Reagan was enjoying his experience—but he shuddered to think of his fate if he aroused the suspicon of these desperate men. No place could have been more isolated or lonely. There was not a habitation in sight along the bay shore. Back of headquarters was a swamp and deep morass: inky black bayous of great depth, shadowed by semi-tropical forests. Seaward were great stretches of salt marsh—a bottomless ooze covered with grass four to seven feet high, and infested with myriads of mosquitoes.

His position was truly perilous. These men had no compunctions of conscience whatever. He would be put out of their path with as little concern as if he were a dog. Had not one of the villains proposed to kill him and dump his body into the river? Tom recalled that Captain Lott did not object to the killing, but merely to any disturbance—or a floating body in the Mississippi which might lead to inquiry!

As he sat on the end of the pier and caught sheepshead and croakers, Reagan felt that he was in one of the most ticklish places he had yet encountered. He was undoubtedly close to a revelation of the method by which huge quantities of liquor were coming in—but that was a mere incident to the task he had set upon.

Somehow, he had the feeling that the solution of the rum running would open the way to a discovery of the method being used in smuggling Chinese. There was not a scintilla of evidence to base his belief upon, but it was a conclusion he believed firmly.

When supper was over and darkness descended upon the bay, a green automobile rear light was placed in one end window of the packing shed facing the entrance to the bay, and a red one in the window on the other side of the same end.

Captain Lott had the men busy in late afternoon moving the store of moss out into the middle of the packing shed floor, and making several smaller heaps of it.

Then, after darkness came, there was a wait until about nine o'clock, when a low, guarded whistle sounded. Everybody sprang to attention, alert, expectant.

As silently as a fish a long black shape slid alongside the pier and eased under the main building. The two signal lights were instantly extinguished. Tarpaulins had been hung at all entrances, and lanterns were lighted inside.

A trap-door in the factory floor was raised, and from below a man clambered up into the vast, shadowy room.

"Well, captain, how's the old sub this trip?" inquired Lott genially, shaking hands.

"Goot — very goot — running like a vatch!" replied the man, who wore a sort of nautical uniform and an officer's cap. "Fine veather, too."

"All you fellows—rig that sling on the block and tackle—get a move on! Captain Tauscher, get one of your cargo hatches open and ease her ahead, right under the trap, please?"

From a heavy crossbeam above the trapdoor dangled a block and tackle with a canvas sling on the end. Tauscher called instructions down into the inky blackness under the building, a couple of lines were passed up to hitch and steady the craft in position, and the sling descended into the submarine's hold, coming out with two cases of rum!

The cases were moved over against the wall, stacked one on the other, and covered with Spanish moss as they were placed.

Tom Reagan was assisting in moving the cases over and camouflaging them with moss so that to a casual observer, should one by accident get into the building, there would be nothing but heaps of Spanish moss. His brain was busy meanwhile.

He had the secret—the stuff was coming over in a large cargo-carrying submarine! No wonder the baffled revenue cutters and extra men to search the top-water boats could not stop this flood of thousands of cases!

But—how was he to utilize his information? And how to go forward, to link it up with the Chinese affair?

And—who was behind this efficient organization owning trucks, motor-boats, a great warehouse and a submarine? He had not yet arrived at the bottom of the affair—that was certain.

He was firmly resolved to go forward—just how did not appear, but he intended to take advantage of each opportunity as it presented.

"Vell—how iss something to eat?" inquired Tauscher.

"Plenty of it, and mighty good—I'll go have Pierre warm it up for you."

Lott started back toward the kitchen.

Directly he returned, nonplused and flustered. He beckoned Tom Reagan to follow him back into the kitchen, then outside the back door. Lying on a pile of sacks was Pierre—dead to the world, with a half-emptied quart bottle of rum by his side.

"The ——ed rascal, he's pried open a case while we were away and here he is! If he wasn't such a good cook I'd get rid of him. Tauscher is hungry and will be mad as —— if he don't get something——"

Captain Lott fumed and fretted.

"Can you warm up something—you seem to know how to cook fish?"

"Surely. I'll get him something to eat soon as I get the fire going. Tell him it will be ready soon."

Lott went back and conveyed the information, while Reagan feverishly stuffed fuel in the stove, sliced some of the cold venison roast and prepared to grill the meat. Coffee was soon in process; he contrived a salad out of cold vegetables and in an almost incredible time was prepared to assuage the hunger of Tauscher.

As he worked, a plan was maturing in Reagan's mind. He had given a swift appraisement to Captain Tauscher, and knew the type. Arrogant, overbearing, vain as a peacock, self-vaunting and very susceptible to flattery, when carefully applied.

In less than twenty minutes Tom sailed out, came to attention and snapped out a salute.

"Beg to report sir, lunch ready in the galley."

Tauscher's hand flew to the visor of his cap, instinctively.

"Donnerwetter—a navy man—a real navy man!" he ejaculated as he turned to follow after Tom.

During the meal so deferential was Tom Reagan, so thoughtful, so respectful and obsequious, that Tauscher was quite enthusiastic. He had not received such treatment since he had left the imperial navy.

"Vere did you serve?" he inquired.

"Battleship, scout cruiser and destroyer, sir."

"No duty on a submarine?"

"Sorry, no sir. They interested me very much."

"I vish you was with me on der U-Z," said Tauscher finally, pushing back from the table. "I make you my assistant. I haf nothing but the roughnecks—who are pigs. They can nefer be anyother thing but pigs."

"Thank you sir," answered Tom with great deference. "I wish I could go sir, but I don't suppose Captain Lott will let me go, sir."

"Lott—Lott—who the —— iss Lott?" exclaimed Tauscher. "He takes his orders from me—I am a third owner of this enterprise—I own that boat—or did. I still own a third of her. Lott? Vy, he does what I say!"

"I sure would like to get to sea again with a real commander. It has been hard to get anything to do since I was discharged from the navy."

"You are willing to go—you know not where—in a submarine?"

"Yes, sir—with you sir. You are a real officer and a gentleman."

"And willing to take the risks of a trade in contraband?"

"Yes, sir—we can outwit them."

"Willing to put up a fight, if necessary?"

"Yes, sir—any time, anywhere, any way."

"Aha! You're a salt after my own heart!"

"Thank you sir."

"One of der crew iss sick: I leave him here and ship you."

"Very good sir—when do we start?"

"Soon as they get that cargo off; then we go for more."

The pair of them emerged from the dining-room, finally. The U-Z had been warped forward and the men were now unloading the rear cargo.

"All right you birds down there, soon as the sub clears out, pole those scows under here and let's get 'em loaded—no time to lose. Be sure you pile plenty of moss over the cases—the wood showed in several places last time," ordered Lott.

"I'm going to take Perry with me and leave that sick man here," announced Tauscher.

"Oh here now, captain—don't—we're short-handed, and he's a good man——"

Lott protested earnestly. Tom was a willing worker and had no curiosity whatever.

"Sorry, but I need him. He iss going with me. How much you owe him?"

"Three days at two dollars."

"I will settle with him. All clear down pelow there?"

"All but four cases, sir!" sung out a voice.

"Get your dunnage aboard," commanded Captain Tauscher.

"Sorry sir—I shipped suddenly with this outfit. Haven't any."

"All right—I'll fix you up with a uniform."

"Ship clear, sir—cargo all out!" announced some one down below.

"Good-by Captain Lott, thank you for the job and the good treatment—and the good eats. Don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way!"

Tom shook hands with Lott.

Tauscher roared with laughter—he had never heard the expression before.

"Ah, there's the lad, don't know vere he's going but villing to go—that's the spirit of the submarine man! I make a real undersea boat sailor of him——"

"You're taking a mighty good man away from me," commented Lott.

"I know it!"

Tauscher was vastly pleased with his find.

The two men clambered down slowly and cautiously. Tauscher took the wheel, and inch by inch the submarine backed out, her keel scraping the soft mud on the bottom of the bay. A huge German named Hugo was engineer. After being clear of the building she eased around, got her bearings on the Pass into the Gulf, and proceeded slowly, for the water was barely deep enough for her. Going out the Pass she submerged as far as depth would allow. Outside, she headed southeast by south.

"Main thing is to get beyond the three-mile limit," explained Captain Tauscher. "Then we come on top—make better time."

"Suppose you should be overhauled?" Tom inquired.

"I've got a commission here in the navy of a little Central American republic, and the U-Z is registered under their flag as a merchant vessel, but a navy auxiliary."

"Pretty smooth!"

"You bet!"

Tauscher was vastly pleased with his acumen.

After a while the indicator showed they were on the high sea where there was less probability of discovery, or interference, even if discovered, and the boat came fully to the surface.

"We go up on deck and get some fresh air?" suggested the captain.

"When we are running on surface we make twelve knots—very fair—if we get too close to a vessel, we submerge," continued Tauscher.

Tom concluded to ask no pointed questions. Such a course would strengthen him with Tauscher, but a liberal application of flattery seemed always to be responded to with bragging and some information of value.

"This certainly is one great scheme to get the stuff in—I'll bet you thought of it?" he suggested deferentially.

"You guess vell!" Tauscher expanded like a sunflower in the morning rays. "It vas my scheme. Mit caution, there is no beating it. I make a million—maybe seferal."

"Great Scott! I hope you'll give me a good job—maybe command of one of your other submarines after you have taught me, and decide to quit?"

"I vill—but of the U-Z. There are no others. She is now the only cargo-carrying submarine afloat."

"Well, well, well! And you own her?"

"A third. She vas all mine, but I sold a third to the rum makers in Cuba to get their stuff to the States; a third to the whisky people, and I keep a third. I draw five dollars a case freight, cash, before I pull out: they buy the oil and pay the crew."

"Gosh, you ought to be getting rich?"

"And I bring over a dozen or so cases of champagne and wine on my own account—pick up a few hunderts on the side. That is my own liddle graft my partners know nothing about——"

"Pretty smooth—pretty smooth!" assured Tom admiringly.

"And, there's something else big—too—" he began, then suddenly closed up like a clam.

"Anybody who thought out this scheme for getting the stuff in can think up other big things."

"Yes," Tauscher admitted. "I haf a good business head. I make a fortune—and yours too, if you stick by me."

"I sure need it."

"Vell, come on now, I explain the boat to you: maybe some time Hugo might get sick, or something; it is best to have another man to know how to run her."

Thus several hours were passed among the intricate mechanism of the submarine, with Tauscher explaining over and over and drilling Reagan in knowledge of the various levers, cocks, cog-wheels and the like.

After eating combined dinner and early supper, Reagan and Tauscher went up on deck again. The sea was calm as a mill pond, therefore the boat was making full headway. Far down the horizon on the left was a smudge of smoke.

"Steamer from New Orleans to New York or Europe via Key West—we keep well off the course," observed Tauscher.

"Did you build this boat, captain?" inquired Tom Reagan.

"No—I found her."

"Found her? Where?"

"I commanded one during the war. I was on duty when the naval equipment was turned over to the Allies. The papers called for so many submarines—but an old, obsolete one not on the active roll was overlooked."

He guffawed.

"But this one is not old and worthless—she's a daisy!"

"Sure; one of the best we had. But the one the Allies got was old and worthless!"

He laughed uproariously.

"But how on earth did you?" Tom puzzled.

"When the boats left I was in this one with two or three friends. When we got outside the mine barrier in the North Sea, I dived—and an old and worthless one came up in my place."

"Smooth enough!"

"Then we ran for a deep, narrow inlet on the north coast of Norway—and laid up a couple of years. The Allies never knew the difference—the men on the old one were released later and I settled with them—and here we are!"

"It took real genius to work that trick!"

"Yes, it did," modestly admitted Tauscher. "Then when you crazy Yankees turned prohibitioners, I saw the chance to make a million. I'm making it. I made those rum fellows pay by the nose—whisky men too."

"You were too smart for them all!"

"I'm too smart for the Allies and the Yankees too. They can't stop Karl Tauscher until he is ready to stop!"

VI

"I WANT you to observe everything close," ordered Tauscher. "You have sense, you have education, you have had sea experience, and you are a gentleman, I can tell that. I need an assistant. I am going to pay you five dollars a day to start on, and train you—more later."

"That is very generous, sir—thank you." Reagan tried to appear overwhelmed with gratitude.

"Now; the course is southeast by south until we pick up the light on Cayo Largo, if at night. That is a coral island off the south coast of Cuba. We pass to the right, giving a wide berth, for there is the Banco de los Jardinillos—little coral islands and shoals—very dangerous. Steer east by south until we pick up light on Cabo Matahambre on the right: then sharp turn into the Bay of Batabano. Pass port of Batabano to the right and anchor in some little islands two miles east. The *mangle* bushes on the islands hide us when we are inside the thicket. The schooner comes out, brings us fuel oil and loads us, and we start for Barataria again."

"It is a great scheme!"

"I'll say it is. Now, you take the wheel a while. I want to see how you handle her."

Under the watchful eye of Tauscher, Tom Reagan acquitted himself well. Then, below after a spell, he was given more instructions by Tauscher, and Hugo, the engineer, as to the complicated mechanism.

It was early afternoon of the next day when the U-Z cautiously made its way into the Bay of Batabano and eased into her place of concealment, screened by a thick growth of *mangle*. A Cuban was asleep in a motor-boat, awaiting their coming.

Half of the crew was given shore leave, and Tauscher then climbed into the boat.

"Come on!" he ordered Tom.

"I want to go somewhere, get a bath, shave, haircut, some decent clothes and a square meal of regular food," observed Reagan clambering aboard with alacrity.

"Good—that was my idea. You will go to the hotel with me. I will advance you money for an outfit—you must be dressed nice to go with me, and be my right-hand man."

Tying up the motor-boat at Batabano, Tauscher hired an automobile to take them to Havana. The train would not start for two hours, and it was unbelievably slow. They made it to Havana in an hour.

Just below the Hotel Pasaje where they registered, there were some shops wide open, although the day was Sunday. A very good plain serge officer's uniform and cap were purchased for Tom, together with an outfit of shirts and other apparel, and new shoes. When he emerged from the barber shop after having his various needs remedied, the mirror reflected a natty appearing naval man who would attract attention in any crowd.

"Well now—that is better!" approved Tauscher. "Now they will not throw us out of a restaurant for tramps. We will go over to the Hotel International—they make there the best *arroz coq pollo* in the world."

Afterward they sat in the plaza for a while, then Tauscher went to do some telephoning, then back to the Hotel Pasaje and their room. Tauscher went downstairs and bought a box of fine cigars. Soon after he returned a Cuban came up and they had a heated interview in Spanish.

As far as Reagan could gather Tauscher was trying to collect five dollars a case for a hundred cases of liquor which should have been on hand for the last cargo, but which, through some miscalculation on the part of the Cuban, did not arrive in time at Batabano. The U-Z went out light on that account, and did not have room to carry the belated shipment in addition to the cargo to be loaded. How the row came out Tom never knew, as despite the discussion and waving of arms, he drifted off into sleep.

In the morning after a shower bath and the Cuban breakfast of coffee, rolls and fruit, Tauscher handed Tom a couple of twenty dollar bills.

"Go out and look around—Havana is interesting. Meet me at eleven here for regular breakfast. Then you can go over and see Morro Castle, and be back here in time for us to start for Batabano at five," the owner of the submarine advised.

Reagan started out aimlessly, looking in shop windows, strolling through the park, and over toward the Prado. He wanted to make sure that Tauscher was not following him. Then he inquired for the cable office, intending to send a brief message to headquarters to relieve whatever anxiety might exist there as to his whereabouts.

On his way to the cable office, caution again reasserted itself. Doubtless all messages of the sort coming to headquarters were reported as filed or received; the cable would not do. Still, it was essential to get word there so that no search for him might be started.

He had progressed down to Calle Cuba, and was opposite the handsome five-story building designated above its main entrance, "Banco Nacional de Cuba." Passing to the right on the sidewalk of *Calle Cuba* Tom glanced up and saw the coat-of arms of the United States and the flag flying above. It was the Havana consulate of the government, and he was never so glad to see anything as that insignia. It meant a solution of his difficulty.

HE WOULD get the consul to aid him—send a letter under the official seal and in the special pouch to Washington, then let it go down to New Orleans, and throw the watchful ring of rum-runners off their guard.

If he did not get back to the home office an inquiry as to his whereabouts might be started, which would disrupt all of his labors, and probably prevent his making the confirmation of his suspicions as to the manner of getting the contraband Chinese across.

Up the steps he flew, and in the consulate he told the clerk in the outer office he must see the consul at once upon a matter of great urgency.

"The consul is at his Summer home across the Bay, very unwell." The clerk said it with an air of finality.

"Somebody acting then, isn't there?"

"Oh yes—one of the office force——"

"Well, I want to see him then."

"What about?"

"I'm not at liberty to tell you. Government business."

After what seemed an interminable wait he was admitted. The acting consul was acutely conscious of the dignity of his position. He wore a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles with a broad ribbon. He had large, buck teeth and a squirrel chin. And he was young, ambitious and anxious to distinguish himself in some manner.

Tom began to tell his story, and the acting consul was obviously suspicious. Dealing with all sorts of adventurers and people endeavoring to extract money, he evidently thought the recital would end with a request of an accommodation for "expenses."

"Why don't you call New Orleans over long distance 'phone, then?" he suggested with a bit of acid emphasis. "If you are what you claim, the office ought to be willing to reverse the charge?"

"Didn't know there was connection."

"Well there is, recently made, and admirable service."

"Will you put in the call for me then, and allow me to talk from here, where I will not be overheard?"

The acting consul was not enthusiastic. He was still afraid this stranger would "stick him" financially.

"I'll pay the charges if when you ask him who I am he does not agree to reverse them," continued Tom, placing one of the twenty dollar bills on the table.

The call went in—rush—and in less than half an hour the acting consul asked the question, was reassured as to Tom's identity—and the charges. He handed the instrument to Tom, whose face brightened as he heard the familiar voice.

"Well, I've got it, chief—get your pencil and make some notes—I may have to call on you for help quick, and want to suggest a plan. You better have a couple of revenue cutters hanging about the mouth of the river so you can start 'em with a rush if needed."

He outlined his plan, and finally hung up. The acting consul had listened attentively, astounded.

Then it occurred to him that this stream of liquor going out from under the nose of the consulate was not exactly a credit to its watchfulness. It was smuggling by wholesale—plus.

There incubated in the back of his head a notion that if he could nab this submarine and get the glory, it would certainly mean his promotion and distinction in the consular service. And this chap might be just an ordinary detective employed on the case.

"Why"—he began genially to Tom, "I'll have the Cuban authorities nab that submarine right here—where is she? You never mentioned that?"

Visions of his work going all for naught flashed before Reagan's mind. A move of that sort would certainly ruin everything.

"Needn't bother—we'll get 'em. I'll get the whole outfit, red-handed, and the sub too, if I am allowed to work this out. Then—there is something else—bigger yet——"

He paused, cautiously.

The more the acting consul thought about it the more he wanted credit for the capture, and breaking up of the gang. It would be the most sensational and startling coup on record. Gobs of advertising for him, and a big boost in the service.

"Where is that boat?" he demanded.

"Resting easy at her berth."

"I order you to tell me where she is!"

Tom looked at him quizzically and kept silent.

"If you don't tell me I'll arrest you as a self-confessed rum runner. I heard you admit it."

"I'm a Government agent——"

"You say you are. I don't know it."

"You telephone——"

"That may have been a confederate in the office."

"Oh, cut that out—you know better than that."

Tom spoke with some measure of contempt.

"You think I can't arrest you?"

"Yes, I guess you can—and mess things up. You couldn't hold me though, and you know it. You'd only let the whole bunch get away when I didn't show up. They'd beat it—instanter."

"Return where?" craftily inquired the acting consul.

"Foxy—aren't you? To the boat, sir!"

"Are you going to tell me where that boat is?"

The young man had risen angrily.

"Sorry sir, but I will not."

"Well you can just consider yourself under arrest—and remain in this office until I communicate with the authorities. The inside of the *calabozo* may change your mind!"

The young fellow was nettled, and lost his head. He was carrying through a bluff. He figured Tom would weaken, if detained long enough.

"Oh, all right—but you are making a big mistake and causing a lot of work to go for nothing."

Tom sat down in a chair by the window and picked up a copy of the morning paper.

There was silence for five minutes, and the outside clerk poked his head in.

"Señor Arrondo and Colonel Smith, with whom you have an appointment: ten minutes past due and they say they are in a hurry?"

"Very well—it is most important. Do not let us be disturbed. Just a moment, before you admit them."

"Step in here a few minutes until I finish this conference, will you?" he commanded, indicating for Tom to go into an adjoining room.

"Say—make it snappy, will you? I want to settle this because I'm due to be back at the meeting place at eleven? Cut out this —— foolishness, will you?" pleaded Tom.

"You're my prisoner—and not the one to dictate terms," replied the young man grandly, swinging the heavy oaken door closed. The key clicked in the lock. Tom darted forward—but too late! He was trapped—and no chance of battering down that one door to the room.

There were four windows—it was a corner room—five stories up. On the seaward side was the roof of a four-story building at least twenty-five feet below. The Banco Nacional building had exceptionally high ceilings, Tom noticed that, when he came up. Beyond the building next door was another, somewhat less high. It was of three stories, the rear overlooking the inner court of the block. He noticed a woman on the third floor balcony doing the family washing. Evidently that floor was used as a residence; the second as well, judging by the back porch.

Reagan knew the self-important young man could not hold him legally in arrest; but he knew the man might detail him and prevent his meeting Tauscher at eleven. Tauscher would probably become suspicious at once and sail without him, and change his terminal arrangements in the United States.

Gone would be the fruits of all his work—and Tauscher would still be at large to unload cargoes of rum at some other point—and possibly other and more interesting freight.

Something must be done—and quickly. It was ten minutes past ten, and Reagan was due at Hotel Pasaje at eleven sharp.

As he gazed seaward where old Morro Castle frowned at the harbor entrance, he noted that Uncle Samuel had recently equipped the windows of his consulate with new awnings.

The next minute Tom was standing on the sill of one of the windows, cutting the stout awning cord. The four windows netted him about thirty feet of it, doubled. This he tied together, put plenty of knots in it so it would not slip through his hands. He made one end fast to the well-bolted iron awning frame on the window casing.

Crawling out backward, he let himself down, hand over hand. In a minute he was down on the roof below. He ran over to the next building. The drop was too great at the rear, but toward the front the tile roof had an elevation of at least five feet more than at the rear. He hung down from the wall of the building he was upon, and dropped the ten feet, landing easily.

Then he hurried to the rear, looked over the rickety porch roof, and selecting a post, eased down until his legs wrapped the support. Then it was an easy matter to let himself to the railing, which held some of the drying family washing.

"*Madre de Dios!*" squalled the fat *señora.* "*Ladrone—ladrone—policios!*"

"*Madama*—I am no robber—I am in danger, only want to get away—please let me pass through the house?" pleaded Reagan in his best Spanish.

"*Ladrone!*" screeched the woman, retreating backward, tripping, and sitting down in her tub of water.

Tom did not wait—he plunged into the kitchen—then the dining-room, and out through a door which he saw led to a hall, and stairs.

He collided with a bilious looking, swarthy gentleman who was just coming up and seeking to enter his domicile. He had an armful of green vegetables and a bouquet of flowers.

"*Carramba!*" squawked the Cuban don, grabbing his coat.

"Same to you—lemme go—I have done nothing!"

Tom was pulling away.

"*Policios—ladrones—policios!*" yelled the don, holding on.

Tom's right fist shot upward and caught the man under the chin. Back on the floor, after sitting heavily, the householder blinked at the stars dancing before his eyes and endeavored to orient himself.

Down the steps, three at a time, Tom sped. Heads were popping from every door and a dozen voices vociferating the call of "police! police!" A crowd was coming, pell-mell down the steps after him when he stepped into the street.

He had presence of mind enough not to run, but leisurely walked the distance of one building, unconcerned and unmoved by the jabbering knot of people at the foot of the steps. Then he entered the Banco Nacional de Cuba, just as the crowd started in pursuit. Headed by two of the ineffective little local police, and having no clear idea of the appearance of the man they sought, the yelping mob surged past the bank.

At the counter Tom produced a twenty-dollar bill and asked for change—five dollars Cuban, the rest American. The clerk was most pleasant.

"I have an appointment at Hotel Pasaje at eleven, and am rather turned around—where can I get a cab?" inquired Tom.

"I will fix that in a minute!" assured the obliging young banker, calling the porter to whom he gave rapid directions in Spanish. The porter motioned for Tom to follow, and went out of the side door on *Calle Cuba*, held up his hand and summoned one of the little one-horse victorias which ply the streets for fares. In a moment Tom was seated, and on his way.

The cabby turned into Obrapia street, while the hue and cry had surged up O'Reilly. Tom opened up the consulate newspaper he had stuck in his pocket, holding it with both hands so it hid his face very nicely, as if deeply interested. In a very few minutes the vehicle halted in front of his hotel—he had ten minutes to spare!

REAGAN sought the barber shop, had his clothes brushed, washed up and put on a clean collar. Then, as he strolled into the hotel lobby, immaculate, Tauscher came puffing in.

"Ten minutes late I am—sorry—come on, we vill get more *arroz con pollo* at the International. Then we leave for port to hurry those blockheads with the loading of the schooner and getting cargo on der *Z.* Confoundt these Latins—they promise eferything—and perform very little."

The captain was evidently ruffled.

Tom was entirely willing—he was hungry as a bear, and elated at having extricated himself from what seemed to be a position where in a short space of time all his efforts would be wrecked.

The breakfast—at eleven fifteen, was of a crab gumbo, a salad of avocados, heaping dishes of the chicken and rice, with pimiento peppers, and a sweet dessert made of fresh coconut—with the incomparable Cuban coffee.

When the automobile was whizzing along the perfect highways to the little port of Batabano, Tom sighed with genuine relief, although he thought the acting consul would more than likely be quiet after being so signally outwitted.

At Batabano a carload of cases had arrived and were being gotten aboard the schooner. No customs formalities were observed. Tauscher had advised the Cubans the liquor was merely being transferred to the Isle of Pines, a Cuban possession, considered locally. He had probably used some substantial argument with the poorly-paid Cuban officials—for he was taking on enough liquor to have kept the entire population of the Isle of Pines in a highly inebriated condition for some twenty years, at least.

Finally the schooner moved out to the little *mangle* thicket of islands, and the slow work of transferring by hand the cases from schooner to submarine was under way. By driving, fuming and aiding with the crew of the *U-Z*, the cargo was finally stowed, the last can of fuel oil emptied into the tanks and everything was in readiness.

At one o'clock in the morning the *U-Z* moved out from her place of concealment, and started upon the most eventful voyage in an eventful career.

VII

PROCEEDING from her haven in Batabano Bay, coasting the Cuban shore, the *U-Z* cruised until in gray dawn two green lights were discerned against the misty background of verdure. The submarine came closer in and, something less than a quarter of a mile offshore, stopped her engines.

Almost immediately two large rowboats put out from the little settlement of palm-thatched huts near the water's edge.

Captain Tauscher was on deck, accompanied by Tom Reagan, waiting for the approaching craft. Two men were rowing each boat, and in one there were five Chinamen, six in the other.

Reagan's pulse beat fast and his heart was filled with elation. His idea had been vindicated, as to the manner of bringing the contraband Chinese across!

In the bow of the leading boat sat a Chinaman of middle age, well dressed, who seemed to be in authority. His craft drew alongside.

"Well, how goes it?" inquired Tauscher genially, shaking hands.

"Very good," gravely replied the Chinaman. "Ten of them, this trip. Here is the money, five hundred dollars each."

He handed a package of bills to Tauscher who put it in his pocket without even looking at it.

"Where is the meeting point?" inquired the commander of the submarine.

"Off Barataria Light—about ten miles. Same schooner."

"All right—get those men of yours pelow, and instruct them they are to obey me. How many for next trip?"

"Only five have made arrangements, as yet."

The man spoke perfect English.

"I will be here this time, next Friday."

"There will be some passengers—possibly ten," advised the Chinaman clambering back into his boat.

He directed the other Chinese in their own language, and they disappeared into the interior.

Tauscher took the wheel, gave signals, and the sub swung about heading for the open sea, picking up speed as she progressed.

"Vell, what do you think of my extra means of making a few dollars—I get rich soon, *hein?*" jovially inquired the captain.

"It's great!" enthused Tom.

"All my own infention. All this Chinese money is mine—my partners know nothing of it. It is none of their business. It is what you Americans call easy velvet. And they can't stop me!"

Tom Reagan's mind was busy at that moment trying to figure out some way to checkmate Tauscher. In his conversation with the chief over the telephone, he had given the location of the old shrimp cannery where the liquor was delivered and then distributed inland. He of course had no knowledge at that time of the transportation of Chinese—only a suspicion. The forces of the Government would await word from him before they moved, and there would be revenue cutters hanging about the mouth of the Mississippi—but that was a considerable distance from Barataria Light. Even should there be a cutter convenient, it would probably mess up matters if it interfered—and his main task was to locate and connect the organization in the United States responsible for the importation of the Celestials. Merely to stop one shipment would be a temporary palliation.

Reagan looked forward to the meeting with the schooner which evidently was to take the Chinamen off the submarine. Without doubt, further information of a most important nature would then become available.

"Well, I'm ready to take some more instruction: the quicker I learn all about this boat, the earlier I can take some of the responsibility off your shoulders," suggested Tom Reagan.

"That is so; come on down, I exblain her to you."

They descended to the engine-room. The ten Chinamen were clustered about in the way.

"Get the —— back aft!" bawled Tauscher at the Chinamen.

They looked at him blankly, and began to gabble to each other. It was Cantonese.

He repeated the order in German—still they did not comprehend at all.

Reagan translated it for them—and they promptly obeyed, astonishment on their faces.

"Why—you speak Chinese?" gasped Tauscher.

"Some — lived over there when I was a kid."

"That makes you more valuable as ever. Find out from them what the gang in the States is charging them to land them and get them work. Maybe I can get more money out of 'em. If I do I make it vorth your while?"

"All right—but let me pick my time."

"Very good: now I exblain the boat some more already."

In the maze of wheels and pipes, indicators, levers, dials and cocks, Tauscher pointed out the main ones. Then he came to two large hand-wheels, side by side, which operated the diving hydroplanes or horizontal rudders. Without these the boat could make no certain headway under water: without them it would be most perilous to go down.

There was a throttle above each wheel, similar to that upon a locomotive, with a spring-ratchet on the handle, which operated upon a row of cogs, holding the planes at the desired angle. When the boat was ready to dive, or was under water, two men operated the wheels under the direction of Tauscher, the dial indicators just above each apparatus registering the position of the planes. These diving hydroplanes at bow and stern were the vital machinery enabling the craft to take depth and maneuver beneath the surface.

Several times Tauscher made Tom handle one of the wheels, while a member of the crew handled the other. The U-Z submerged and ran under water until Reagan was thoroughly familiar with the process.

Then he was shown the "statical" which would keep the craft submerged when still; a complicated system of valves and cocks and the machinery for starting and stopping; and the system of flooding the tanks by which the boat was raised or lowered. Tauscher explained the dire consequences of flooding the tanks unequally, and warned Tom under no circumstances to touch or be allowed to touch, the valves controlling the sea-cocks, which would, if opened, sink the vessel.

The lesson lasted over three hours, and Tom Regan felt he had the fundamentals thoroughly in mind. The rest of the day the boat plowed steadily through the Gulf: She was to meet the schooner about noon next day off Barataria Light.

"Now: subbose you find out from those chinks what they pay to get landed? If there is some way we can do it ourselves or make them pay more—I make it vorth your while?" suggested the thrifty captain next morning to Tom.

"All right—just leave me alone with them—and I'll leave it to you to do the right thing by me."

"You will haf no kick. Work fast, that schooner is liable to come along soon—"

"What schooner?"

"The schooner that takes these chinks off and lands them along the coast—stupid!" bawled Tauscher irascibly.

"Oh well—I didn't just understand. If you go up on deck and leave me to talk with them they will be more free. I think they are afraid of you."

Tauscher nodded, and climbed up through the conning-tower.

The Celestials were in a bunch toward the stern, terrified at their surroundings, the clank and whir of machinery, the mystery of a craft such as they had never dreamed of.

Tom began talking easily to them of his life at Canton, calling over names of prominent Chinese there, mentioning places familiar to the passengers, and the men became animated. He asked if they did not desire a smoke, as it would be very difficult to obtain opium in the United States, and they had better enjoy a few whiffs while they could. Four of them at once produced pipes and made ready for the drug they craved. Two members of the crew of the sub were gawking at them.

"That stuff must be pretty good, from the way they go after it?" observed one of the men, named Richards.

"Want to try a whiff or two? I'll make one of them fix you a pipe—it settles the nerves," suggested Tom.

"I sure need something—my nerves is all tore to pieces. I got lit in Havana and didn't bring but a little aboard and I'd give five dollars right now for a drink——

"This will steady you better than a drink would."

Tom rattled directions at one of the men who prepared a pill of opium over the little pocket spirit lamp, and handed the pipe to Richards, who drew gingerly upon it. After the first few whiffs a delicious sense of freedom seemed to enthrall him, judging by his expression.

"Say, this is great!" he exclaimed. "Gosh. I wish I had known it before—say, the thing's gone out?"

Tom nodded to the man to whom the pipe belonged, and he at once prepared another pill for Richards, who went after it with enthusiasm.

"Hey, Joe, better come try this—better'n any liquor I ever seen—makes you feel like a prince—say—I'll sell you this here sub for one of them pipes an' some ammunition for it!" babbled the exalted Richards.

"Let's see a shot of it?" commanded Joe with a sheepish grin, lounging aft.

Tom handed over some money to the Chinaman, who visibly brightened thereat.

"These poor chinks have paid out all their money for passage and it's only fair to make them even—this stuff comes high——"

"It's worth a million dollars," advised Richards drowsily, sitting down on the floor and leaning against the wall.

Joe pulled tentatively on the pipe.

"Tastes rotten—maybe the feel is better?" he suggested.

"Keep hitting it—the feel will come!" mumbled Richards.

His eyes were showing drowsiness. Joe redoubled his efforts and inhaled deeply, exhausting the pill of opium in a few puffs. The obliging Chinaman fixed another.

"Say, it is good—come 'ere, Hugo, an' try a whiff!" invited Joe.

"I got to run this boat—I don't want any. Besides, I ain't been drunk," snarled the engineer whose specialty was being surly and a general grouch.

"Ah—you're scared of it—I bet you five dollars you don't dare smoke two pipes of it—you ain't able to carry it," jeered Tom Reagan.

"I take you!" bellowed Hugo, who hated Reagan because of the evident regard showed for him by Tauscher.

Before Tom came aboard Hugo was Tauscher's right hand; since then, he had been merely engineer.

He slammed a five dollar bill on a locker top, and Tom covered it with another. Hugo manfully smoked the pipe until it yielded no more, and went through with the second one. Then with a triumphant grin he pocketed the ten dollars.

Richards was asleep, sitting on the floor: Joe was nodding, and Hugo was moving about in a dreamy, half-fuddled condition.

At any rate, three of the crew were in an easier condition to handle, should the emergency arise! Tom viewed the men with considerable satisfaction. There were two others, stupid fellows—and Tauscher.

He went into a discussion with the Chinamen as to the cost of their getting into the United States. The organization charged them a thousand dollars each, in addition to the five hundred paid for passage on the submarine, and the arrangements in Cuba looking to that end.

The imported Chinese virtually sold themselves into slavery until they earned the money advanced—and interest. Some of them by summoning all their resources, levying upon their relatives and friends, were able to produce a few hundreds in addition to the submarine passage money—the majority were to be landed owing the entire sum.

No man would dare not carry out the agreement: the tong power was great, and many a dead Chinaman in the past had evidenced the remorseless insistence of those engineering the deal that it be carried out to the last penny.

Then the men talked of their homes in China—of old, weakened and poverty stricken parents, whom they hoped to help in the land of golden opportunity; of wives and children left behind; Tom Reagan knew there would not be a dollar to send home—the tong would take it all.

Recollections of the miserable existence of those wretched people in China, the dire poverty—starvation even, rose in Reagan's mind. He could see them waiting—waiting—for the help that would never come, from son, brother, husband, until it was years too late. Then his own part in the matter struck home—he would aid in deporting these poor wretches, who had already spent their maximum of money in reaching the shores of the United States—and he was troubled.

"Look here," he blurted to them in their own language, "why don't you people go to Mexico, instead of the United States? There are more opportunities for you there. You are not in daily danger of being deported—and losing all you have spent. There is little open to you in the United States—you cannot earn much: in Mexico they do not object to Chinese in business. It is a great, rich country, bound to develop. It is not overcrowded. You could go there without the handicap of a big debt hanging over you. Suppose, for instance, each of you could land with $500 cash, and no debt, and opportunity smiling at you?"

The astonished Chinese were stunned into silence. Finally one of the older men spoke:

"Sir, we appreciate what you say: but how do you know these things, and why do you tell us this, when there is no chance of our realizing?"

"Wing Fu, I never have forgotten the friends I made as a child in China. Nor have I ever found a Chinese ungrateful, or who would betray a confidence."

Wing Fu bowed gravely, and the others looked appreciation.

"I tell you this because I am an agent of the United States working to stop the importation of you people. I did not make the laws—but if you go ahead, you will certainly be captured, deported, and lose everything."

"I believe you—and thank you," the man replied. "What shall we do?"

"If you all are not afraid of a possible fight—if you will obey my orders implicitly—you will be in Mexico in three days, with your money back! Do you want that—free, no debt, a better opportunity than in the United States, and with capital to start upon?"

There was unanimous answer—and then discussion of details of the plan.

"Hey, down there—you going to take all day?" Tauscher bawled down the manhole.

"Coming—directly!" answered Reagan.

"That man is breaking the law, and he knows it. He does not know what I am, nor my business. But, if you people will trust me, obey me and act without fear with me, all will be well."

"You can depend upon us—is it not so?" replied Wing Fu, addressing his compatriots.

Every man bowed assent.

"Then we will win," assured Reagan, going up to report to Tauscher.

"These men pay a thousand dollars additional to the gang in the United States," Tom told the captain.

"Good—very good—we make this outfit on the boat pay us one hundred dollars more each, before we give up the passengers. I give you twenty-five dollars each for the information."

"Righto! Stand pat on it, cap—make them come across—they've got plenty of money and might as well loosen up to us as to have it themselves!"

"Sure we'll stand pat—they got to pay!"

"How many are going to be on that schooner—and if they are likely to make trouble, have we got any weapons?" anxiously inquired Reagan.

"Sure we have—eight rifles and ammunition, and six automatics—here's the locker key—second on the left facing aft. Go down and bring me an automatic and a couple of clips of cartridges—get one yourself."

Tom dived down into the interior, provided himself, showed the store of weapons to Wing Fu—and then failed to lock the door when he returned the key to the commander.

VIII

TOM REAGAN'S first plan was to use the Chinese as a force to seize the submarine, make prisoners of Tauscher and the crew, and navigate the vessel himself to New Orleans.

The capture would be easy—two of the men were stupid from opium, and Hugo, the giant engineer, was keeping awake only by sheer will-power, going about his tasks mechanically and in a daze. It would not be difficult to overwhelm him. The others were stupid fellows of no kidney to relish a fight.

But—reflected Regan—what of his promises to the Chinese? If he landed them at New Orleans the authorities would be compelled to deport them. They would be sent back home, perhaps to receive the vengeance of the tong vented upon them and their relatives, and would of course lose their savings.

Another scheme had to be matured—and quickly.

"Think I'll go down and try to get a line on how those chinks get to Cuba—maybe we could take that over in some way and make some money out of it?" Tom ventured to the commander as they stood on deck.

"Go ahead: glad you have enterprise. The more I make, the more you make."

Down in the submarine, Reagan called Wing Fu, and put the proposition that he should tell all he knew of the receiving organization in the United States.

Wing Fu considered carefully, and agreed; giving names and addresses, both in the United States and in Cuba. Tom made notes as he talked. With this information there would be no difficulty in bringing to a finish the ring's existence.

"The schooner is coming up—you better be with me. Tell those chinks they are to stay there until you come for 'em!" called Tauscher.

Reagan picked up a short crowbar when Hugo was not looking, and slipped it under a cushion on a locker seat. He held a hasty whispered conference with Wing Fu, and as Tauscher called again, mounted the ladder.

"Now: when they come up, I am going to make them pay me something more for each man out of that thousand they get—" Tauscher asserted confidently.

"I doubt if they have very much money with them—" suggested Tom.

"They'll have some. We'll take it. A dollar is a dollar. They are robbing the chinks: we may as well rob them. We'll get something—and they won't quit us, either. This is the only way they have ever found to be a cinch to get these men in——"

"Suppose they refuse, absolutely?"

"We'll refuse absolutely to deliver the ten men."

"And if they sail off?"

"Why," replied Tauscher with a heartless grin, "we'll dump them ashore somewhere—anywhere—or make them walk the plank. We have their five hundred dollars each—and it would be a good lesson to this gang."

"What about making a couple of lines fast when they come alongside so they can't sail off and leave us?"

"A good idea!" approved the Captain. "Go down and get two hawsers ready for bow and stern."

Tom while below, managed to impart additional details to Wing Fu, who in turn passed them on to the desperate Chinamen, who were tense with suppressed excitement.

Reagan kicked, pulled and hustled the two men stupid with opium and got them up the ladder with the ropes and into the fresh air—they were harmless fellows and would be of importance not at all, one way or the other. Hugo sat by his engine, dozing and scowling.

Back on deck with Tauscher, the latter appeared nervous, as the schooner approached closer, swinging about on the last tack to come alongside. Tom himself felt none too certain at the outcome.

"I'm going down and take a couple of drinks," asserted Tauscher. "I must be ruthless—terrible to those fellows—and I feel not very ferocious—come on!"

Captain Tauscher broke open one of the cases, and from the bottle of rum he extracted he poured a tumbler full and gulped it. Tom swallowed about a tablespoonful. Waiting a moment, Tauscher poured the glass half full again, and drank it.

"Now, I can bulldoze them — outtalk them—scare them!" he asserted confidently. "Nail that case up—and join me —hurry!"

REAGAN went to the flag locker and extracted the United States flag, stowing it inside his jacket. Then he climbed the ladder as the sails on the schooner rattled down and she came alongside. The submarine's engines started, and the two boats proceeded until the schooner lost her momentum, and the lines were made fast.

Tom thrilled at the sight of an evil yellow face looking over the rail—a face he had seen in Baltimore, upon which he had put his mark during that midnight encounter in the old waterfront shed. Their glances met.

An uneasy expression flickered in the eyes of Scar-Face. Something about Tom Reagan disquieted him—evidently.

Far down on the horizon was a smudge of smoke. Reagan looked at it long and earnestly through the binoculars—Tauscher was truculently observing the schooner and crew.

"Come on up you fellows—all of you!" bawled Tauscher down the hatch.

The liquor was beginning to get in its work.

"You must go aboard with me!"

"Well, where's your freight?" inquired the captain of the schooner, a squint-eyed man with heavy black moustaches and a small gold ring in his left ear.

"Below: who is responsible for the freight, Captain Sanchez?"

"This Chinaman—Hom Fang."

He indicated Scar-Face. It was the first time Reagan had ever heard the name of his old acquaintance.

Tauscher climbed aboard the schooner, with his four men and Reagan.

"You people have not been dealing fairly with me," began Tauscher in belligerent tone, to the Chinaman. "I must have one hundred dollars each for the ten men; costs have gone up and there is need for it. Pay me before I deliver!"

"This is a dirty hold-up!" heatedly replied Hom Fang in very forcible English. "A trade is a trade; not one ——ed cent more!"

Tauscher then began bellowing arguments and threats at him. Captain Sanchez chimed in, defending Hom Fang.

Reagan was counting the crew of the *Pajaro*—merely the captain and five other men—rather sorry-appearing fellows who gave the impression that trouble was the thing they desired least of all. He sauntered back to the wheel and spoke to the man who was standing with one hand on it—a mild eyed individual with a drooping, walrus-type mustache and a settled expression of amiability.

"I'm afraid there is going to be an awful row," suggested Reagan.

"Don't look good a bit. I don't want to get hurt in no other fellow's fight—and ain't goin' to. Nothin' in it for me!"

"If there's a mix-up it will be an ugly one—Tauscher is half-drunk and mad——"

"Yeah, that cap'n of yours looks mean, and that chink and the skipper of this tub are mean as they look, too."

"See that smoke down yonder? I'm going to fasten this flag on the halyard Union-down—let it trail over the stern and if a row starts you hoist it. That will bring the steamer to us! I don't like the looks of things!"

Voices were rising heatedly from the assembled crowd about Tauscher, Hom Fang and Captain Sanchez. Reagan quickly attached the flag in distress signal. It hung out of sight.

"I'll sure hi'st her—an' I don't think it will be so long until I have to, neither!"

Reagan took another look through his binoculars at the approaching craft. The white hull, the stars and stripes rippling gaily from her stern and the Union Jack from the bow indicated she was a revenue cutter. Unless her attention was attracted she might merely consider the schooner one of the fishing fleet out after red-snappers and pass on. The submarine was alongside, and the schooner's hull concealed its upper works if the cutter continued on her course.

Voices of the contenders grew strident—the captain of the *Pajaro* was shaking his finger under Tauscher's nose and cursing him most eloquently—Tauscher's face was purple with rage.

"Go tell Hugo to come up here—quick!" he commanded Reagan.

As Reagan dropped lightly from the ladder, he saw Hugo turn the bottle of rum skyward to extract the last drop.

"Better get up stairs, quick—they are about to gang the skipper and he sent for you!" Tom urged.

With a growl Hugo picked up a Stillson wrench and surged through the manhole to the scene of trouble. With half a quart of rum inside and a generally ugly disposition, trouble was exactly what he wanted most at that moment.

The Chinese were the sole other occupants below. Reagan drew the crowbar from under the cushion, put it in the left hand diving-plane control wheel and heaved with all his might. The wheel cracked, gave way, and fell to the floor. The same process on the right-hand wheel, and the U-Z was ruined as an under-sea boat, for she could not maneuver under water.

Reagan then moved swiftly to the mechanism controlling the rear ballast tanks, opened them wide, searched about until he found the sea-cocks, and opened them.

A series of shots from the deck of the *Pajaro* was evidence that the row was on.

"Follow me now—bring that piece of rope—and don't shoot unless I order!" Reagan called to Wing Fu as he went up the ladder and on to the deck.

The Chinese followed as fast as they could clamber out of the turret.

Tauscher was standing by Hugo's side, automatic in hand: Captain Sanchez of the *Pajaro* was rolling on deck, evidently downed by a peeling lick on the head from Hugo's wrench; about him stood four members of the crew, and Hom Fang, with a revolver poised, ready to shoot.

Reagan cast an anxious eye upward and saw the flag was at the halyard peak, Union-down, and that the revenue cutter had changed her course and was bearing down upon them, with a bone in her teeth—a cloud of black smoke belching from her funnel, and her flags whipping in the breeze.

At the head of the ten Chinese Reagan surged over the rail and as they did, Hom Fang fired at Tauscher, whose automatic fell from his hand as he grasped his forearm where the bullet struck. Hom Fang whirled to fire at Reagan, whom he vaguely feared, when Tom fired first, hitting the Chinaman in the leg.

"Get Tauscher—get Hugo!" he whispered to his force, and in a second the ten Chinese had overpowered the two men, tying Hugo securely and holding the puzzled captain.

"He has your money in his inside pocket —you better get it!" suggested Reagan to Wing Fu, who promptly relieved Tauscher of the package of bills, and a considerable amount of other money.

"Tie him up, and get that Chinese!" ordered Reagan, covering Hom Fang with his automatic.

Realizing that Reagan was head of the revolt, Hom Fang fired at him, the bullet plowing through Tom's coat and merely scorching the skin. Before he could fire again the peacefully inclined helmsman jumped on his back, and four Chinese swooped down upon him and held him.

"I expect this fellow has some of your money too," suggested Tom.

Wing Fu went through his compatriot's clothes with great celerity and brought forth a gratifying sum.

"Don't remember me, do you?" inquired Tom Reagan pleasantly, as the men tied Hom Fang's hands behind his back. "Ever see this before?"

He exhibited about three inches of silken strangulation cord to the astonished captive.

"Remember that night you thought you had me with this, down in that old shed at Baltimore? And I think I left that little cross-ways souvenir on your face? Well—well, who'd have thought we'd meet this way?"

Hom Fang grew pale, even under his inscrutable mask of a face, and shifted uneasily on his feet.

"You're crazy—" he muttered.

"Like a fox. I've been after you since that night. You'll do about fifteen years in the pen——"

"Ahoy there!" hailed a voice from the revenue cutter now drawing alongside. "What's the trouble?"

"Mutiny! Pirates! Robbers!" bawled Captain Sanchez of the *Pajaro.*

"He's a liar—I'm in command now—I'm Reagan of the Secret Service—come aboard!"

Tauscher erupted into most horrible curses, and attempted to snatch a pistol from one of the Chinese with which to shoot Reagan—and received a clout on the head which quieted him.

"I've a bunch of prisoners for you—come aboard!" continued Reagan to the commander of the revenue cutter.

"My ——! My boat is sinking—she's listing!" yelled Sanchez.

Attention was instantly directed to the decided list the schooner had on the side where the submarine was tied.

"It's that sub sinking and she'll carry us with her—cut them hawsers, quick!" ordered Sanchez.

One man ran for a hatchet—another was feverishly working with his sheath knife on the forward line. As that parted and the U-Z started to swing away, Tauscher leaped to the deck of the submarine—followed instantly by Hugo, whose bonds he cut in a moment—and as the stern line parted under blows from the hatchet, Hom Fang made a flying leap and landed aboard.

Down into the doomed vessel went Tauscher and Hugo in vain hope of stopping the sea-cocks and equalizing the water ballast which now all but had her bow out of the water. In some way the engines were started—she shot forward, lurchingly, began to describe a wabbling arc, with the bow out of the water almost.

They were too late—there was too much water inside, and the sea-cocks could not be reached—the rear ballast tanks had thrown her out of equilibrium, and only a miracle could save her.

Tauscher had given it up—his head appeared out of the conning tower, and with a revolver he had obtained below he began a fusillade at the *Pajaro*.

"I'll go down with my ship—you can't capture me—I stay by my boat—*schwein*—dogs, *Amerikaners!*" he screamed as he sought to put another clip of cartridges in the pistol.

The U-Z poised, bow clear out of the water and at an angle of more than 45 degrees—then gently she slipped backward, going down by the stern, until there was merely a boiling, seething lot of water where a moment before she had been.

"Well, by the eternal gods, crook that he was, I'll say he was a brave man!" blurted Reagan to the captain of the revenue cutter.

"Died like a true sailor and a regular fighting man!"

"I THOUGHT I had three very important prisoners for you, captain," continued Reagan, after satisfying that officer as to his status. "They are all at the bottom of the Gulf now—I could not take a chance of their making a dash and escaping—as they would have done if I hadn't disabled the vessel."

"Well—it greatly simplifies matters," agreed the captain of the cutter.

"There is one fairly important one—Sanchez, captain of this schooner—he's been distributing Chinese along the coast, and we want him. I don't believe we care for any of the rest of the crew—except as witnesses. You better give instructions to hold them."

"All right, point 'em out, let's hustle 'em aboard——"

"I'll keep two of the *Pajaro's* men and two from the sub—these are the ones I want here; get aboard that cutter you other birds!" commanded Reagan.

"You better get a line aboard so we can tow this tub in."

"No, I'm going to stay aboard with this lot of Chinese and go on a short voyage."

"I think you better bring her into port—you and my crew will probably get some prize money when she is condemned and sold."

"If you say she must go in port, go she does, but first I'm going to see these poor Chinese through. They've been mistreated and robbed by this gang I've just busted up. If we take 'em within the three-mile limit, the Government will be obliged to deport them. So, it's a matter of good faith—I must stay by them."

"Sure—that will be all right—but what are you going to do?"

"Take command, with these four bullies here and the chinks, sail this tub along the coast to Matamoras, Mexico, right across the river from Brownsville, Texas, and turn 'em loose on Mexican soil: Mexico has no law against their entry. They have their money back; they can go by rail to Monterey and get a start there or at other places. Then I'll turn the *Pajaro* over to the customs authorities at Brownsville or bring her back to New Orleans, just as you say?"

"Go ahead—anything that suits you, suits me."

"Thanks—now, you think you had better go into New Orleans or go into Barataria and clean up the receiving end of this rum running crowd? They are all due to be there."

"It's only about fifteen miles in, Mr. Reagan. I think I'll go catch the whole crowd now."

"All right; step over here and let me give you a few pointers——"

They conferred in low tones.

"Well, good-by, Captain Reagan—" the commander of the revenue cutter smiled. "Or shall I say Captain Kidd—you took the boat in good-old fashioned style?"

"It's a clean-up anyway," laughed Reagan. "The sub is sunk without trace—and that was the vital link to get rid of. If we'd have taken her in she might have been able to get out of it due to her foreign registration and given us trouble for years to come—but she'll bother us no more; and two of the master minds of the scheme are with her, and I've the data on which to send the rest of the batch in the United States to the pen for the balance of their lives—so I guess its a pretty thorough job!"

"I'll say it is!" heartily agreed the captain.

"Hey you, quartermaster, bring about three days' stores over on this boat—and water," he commanded.

"Much obliged," said Reagan. "I don't imagine there is much aboard——"

"Nothin' hardly," said the man who had hauled up the flag and jumped on Hom Fang in time to prevent him shooting at Reagan. "An' powerful sorry grub at that."

"All right—we'll be very glad to get something."

As the stores were being delivered aboard, Reagan talked with the captain, who guessed that with fair winds they would make Matamoras in about three days.

"Here, you bullies—would you rather stick with me and go to Mexico, or to the Atlanta penitentiary?"

"You, sir!" sung out the four men selected.

"All right—what's your name?" he demanded of the former steersman.

"Onezime Champagne, sir: Creole sir, from Bayou Bœuf——"

"All right Onezime—you will be first mate. Get that flag right side up, then take charge and get the sails up and let's go—it's a long way yet."

As the lines were cast off, Captain Sanchez poked a glowering countenance over the rail of the cutter.

"—— pirate—*carramba—ladrone—sinverguenza—perrocito!*" he bawled and shook his fist and spat toward Tom.

"Go with God, señor!" replied Reagan in the Spanish vernacular with the pious good-by of Sanchez's race.

Sanchez nearly choked.

"Set your course dead west!" commanded Captain Reagan as the wind caught the sails and the jib and flying jib steadied the *Pajaro*.

"Aye aye, sir!" sung Mate Onezime, as he took the wheel.

Reagan stood, feet apart, hands in his pockets, feeling the surge of the schooner from a stiff breeze—and liking it.

The Chinese had been holding a consultation near the bow, and they approached, with Wing Fu at their head. He had the imposing package of money in his hand.

"We want to express our gratitude to you—and ask that you take half the money you saved us," he said earnestly.

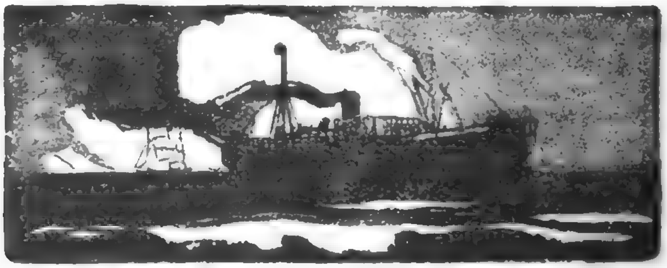
"Well—I want you fellows to allow me to pay these four men for their work in sailing the ship, and perhaps give them railroad fare home—will that be satisfactory?" he replied.

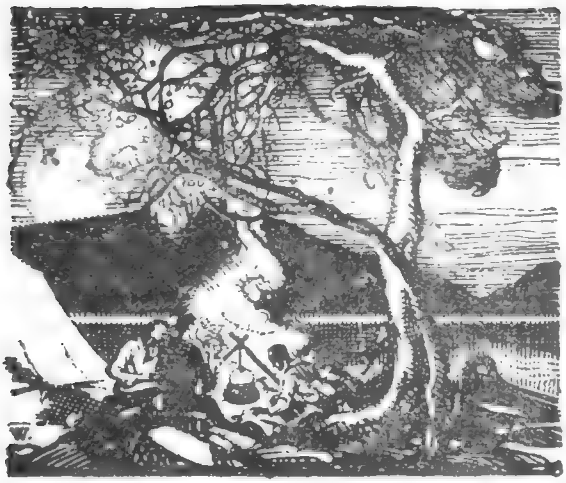
"Anything you say or do is satisfactory," said Wing Fu.

"That will be about all that will be required, then——"

"You won't take any of it?" the man inquired in disappointed accents.

"No—but say, by jove, I'll have to get you to lend me railroad fare to New Orleans and I'll send it back to you—I haven't a red cent to my name!"





THE CAMP FIRE

A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

AS TO cougars screaming. And how about it—Do animals think? Personally I can't put up any scientific argument, but it will be a hard job to make me think that some of them don't. At least that they think as much as, for example, people who are opposed to national defense.

Los Angeles, Cal.

What do the rest of us believe about the screams of cougars-panthers-painters-puma-mountain lions?

My brother Will met one in the Minnesota woods, in a narrow road. It looked at him, yawned, then screamed horribly. It had just eaten all it could hold, from a deer it had killed, within forty yards of the road, so it left him in peace.

My brother Olin and his two sons camped in Calaveras County, California, on one side of a narrow, deep river. Two cougars came down to the opposite shore to watch their horses and sniff the sweaty odor from them. Both these beasts screamed repeatedly, while in plain sight of the three, enraged because the stream barred their way.

A friend of mine camped, without a tent, in the Sierra Madre Mountains near this city. A cougar yowled and screamed in the mountain forest above him, but he did not worry. He went to sleep and in the morning woke to find the tracks of a cougar ringing his bed. It had studied the strange object and then gone on. Later in the day he heard it scream, while he was on a ridge, and he turned in time to see it just moving toward a thicket. He dropped a .22 bullet in one ham and the cougar gave a pretty exhibition of tumbling, snarling, screaming cat frenzy.

Personally, I never heard one scream where I could see it in the act, but I know they do yell like blazes. I have had a cougar come to the side of my tent and sniff at it, when I could put my hand on the canvas at the spot his nose touched.

As for Burroughs—when he said—"Animals do not think," I retorted with, "You admit they have good memories. Webster, Worcester, Century and Standard all define memory as 'The conscious reproduction of a previous thought.' If animals never think, whence came the previous thought?" He made no reply then or later, when I talked with him.—E. E. HARRIMAN.

A WORD from Arthur O. Friel about his complete novelette in this issue:

I am not saying how much truth there is in this little tale. But I'm saying that it's not all fiction.

The sort of American who thinks the flag is simply a gaudy rag to hang outside his store when he has a "special sale," who knows women only as chickens and hens, and who pictures the tropics as an elysium of voluptuous señoritas and jazzing guitars, may not get the drift of this tale. But then, he probably wouldn't read this magazine anyhow. The chap who will really understand it is he who has been buried for many a long moon in an alien wilderness and then has suddenly found himself staring at his own flag or into the face of a real, thoroughbred white woman. And if by any chance it should drift into the hands of one of those poor devils—the Men Who Can't Come Back—he is the man who will plumb it to the bottom.

It's not much use to try to explain just what I mean to the folks who haven't felt it. And the exiles—temporary or permanent—don't have to be told. So I'll let it go at that.—A. O. F.

BACK in the earliest days of Camp-Fire there began a discussion of an Irish Buddhist priest that has continued at intervals through the years. I confess I've become pretty well mixed on the subject, but the following sent in by E. P. Gilchrist of Hammond, Ind., makes interesting reading. It is a clipping from the Salt Lake *Telegram* of May 31, 1923. At this writing Captain La Voy's expedition should be getting under way.

Calcutta, (By A. P.)

Dr. Hugh McGovern, the Irish Buddhist priest who recently succeeded in penetrating the world's greatest rampart of mountains, the Himalayas, behind which lies the forbidden city of Lhassa, has just returned to Darjeeling after having been arrested by British frontier authorities for violating Tibet's sacred ground. The doctor reports that in his attempts to get into Lhassa he and his four companions suffered intense privations and exposure in the snowclad mountains, which are 500 feet higher than the highest peaks in the United States.

After battling with snowstorms day and night and being compelled more than once to retrace his steps, McGovern at Hangu was confronted with a strike of his servants, who refused to go farther. He had to beat them into submission before they would resume the journey. He kept his ultimate destination secret from his companions, fearing they would desert him if they knew the distance and the hardships. On the desolate mountain pass of Karula the Irish prelate revealed his objective. Only under compulsion did his companions continue the journey with him.

TO AVOID detection by the fanatical Tibetans, Dr. McGovern dyed his hair and painted his whole body so as to look like a native. Thus disguised and attired in the dress of a peasant, he played the rôle of coolie and cook. After many weeks of trying experiences and reverses he finally reached Lhassa, only to be apprehended by the Tibetans, who ordered his immediate deportation. He is now with friends in Darjeeling and will soon leave for England.

AN AMERICAN who is planning to enter Tibet is Captain Merl La Voy of Seattle, Wash. Armed with credentials from the American State Department and permits from the Chinese government, La Voy, with a number of American scientists and explorers, will leave India late in the Fall and proceed directly to Lhassa.

THE following from the Jacksonville, Fla., *Times-Union* of April 1, 1923, was sent to us by comrade John H. Mackey of Jacksonville and gives a particularly good rough idea of what whaling really meant:

New Bedford, Massachusetts.

The firm of J. & W. R. Wing has gone out of business. The announcement means little to the present generation, but when the whaling industry was at its height the flag of the house of Wing, a letter "W" on a field of white and a red ball on a field of blue, was known on the seven seas.

It was in 1849 that Joseph and William R. Wing, natives of the neighboring town of Dartmouth, opened a whaleman's outfitting shop in this city. In 1853 they acquired managing ownership of their first whaling ship, the *John Dawson*, and for more than forty years the firm was one of the dominating factors in the romantic trade.

In that period twenty-five ships sailed under the Wing flag. Most of them met a tragic end. The *John Dawson*, after making a dozen voyages to the whaling grounds, was lost in a storm off Panama. Strangely enough, the first ship built expressly for the Wings, the bark *Sunbeam*, launched at Mattapoisett in 1856, survived nearly all the others and went whaling for the firm until 1910, when she was sold and later lost.

The bark *Kathleen* was in service from 1857 to 1902, when she was rammed by a whale and went down off the South American coast. Several other vessels were crushed in the Arctic ice and still others foundered in storms at sea.

The bark *Triton*, a veteran of exciting experiences before the Wings bought her, was in the whaling business for a hundred years before the Arctic ice finally caught her. In 1846 she was attacked by natives of a South Sea island at which she had touched. The crew rallied to the defense with whaling guns, harpoons and lances, but five of their number were killed and seven wounded before the Nantucket ships came up and rescued them.

During the civil war there was both perilous and profitable work for the whalers. Confederate cruisers, particularly the *Shenandoah* and the *Alabama*, were raiding northern shipping. The Wings were advised to put their ships under the British flag.

"I send my ships out under the Stars and Stripes if every one is lost," declared William Wing.

He did, and only one of them was captured. The *Shenandoah* overtook the ship *Brunswick* in the Arctic in 1865 and burned her. Oil brought home by the fourteen Wing vessels then in the trade gave the firm a profit of $300,000 in the Civil War period.

Joseph Wing died many years ago. Later William was killed in a railroad wreck. The estate maintained the firm name, but in recent years the only business done was in ready made clothing, in which the Wings has been pioneers here in connection with their outfitting shop. Now the firm has been dissolved and a department store has taken over its ancient home.

A WORD from Thomas Topham in connection with his story in this issue:

Los Angeles.

As to the reference in the story to Yaqui Indians in Lower California. Northern Lower California is not the natural grounds of the Yaqui. However, I am very familiar with that locality and have myself met marauding bands of Yaqui there—once having had a narrow escape from them near Laguna Salada. The reason that I used them is that they are a fierce tribe, while the resident Indians of Lower California are more peaceable.—THOMAS TOPHAM.

FROM Manila comes a letter harking back to the old first American Legion, organized by our Camp-Fire, and urging coöperation in that bulwark of our national defense, the O.R.C.:

Manila, Philippine Islands.

I have seen considerable discussion in the Camp-Fire in recent months regarding the present military condition and policy of the United States. Reference has also been made to the work of the old American Legion and the efforts that we made in the direction of preparedness in the days before the World War. I wonder, however, if the rank and file of the old Legion know that the work we tried to carry out in an unofficial manner is now being handled by that section of the Army, called the Officers' Reserve Corps.

THE Officers' Reserve Corps is today carrying out, in an efficient manner, the things we dreamed of in the old days, but the great handicap of the Reserve Corps today is the fact that so few people understand its purpose. Here is a place where the old Legionaries may be of great service, for they thoroughly understand the principles of the Reserve Corps and can do yoeman service in helping the spread of the ideas and the needs of the Corps.

It should also be remembered that there are hundreds of the ex-Legionaries who are eligible for commissions in the Officers' Reserve Corps but who from lack of knowledge haven't as yet made application.

WITH the Officers' Reserve Corps brought up to the strength contemplated, at the time of its formation, it will be the framework upon which an army may be built within a very short period of time, avoiding the profitless confusion of misdirected effort which we suffered from in the early days of the World War.

By intelligent propaganda, in behalf of the Officers' Reserve Corps, we will be helping to realize in concrete form the old ideals of the American Legion. Full information may be obtained from the Adjutant General's Office at Washington, at any military post and from members of the Reserve Officers Association.—AN OLD LEGIONARY.

AS STATED earlier, we've bought some more F. St. Mars nature stories that have been published in English magazines. St. Mars is dead, there can be no new stories and your interest in his work has been so very strong that we waive our objection to publishing stories printed previously in English magazines, even though English magazines circulate but little in this country. We've waived that objection before and probably shall again when your interest seems to warrant so doing.

Not only are his stories fascinating and exciting dramas, but his knowledge of natural history has stood the gruelling test of your scrutiny. There are many among you who know the life of the wilds as close observers and quite a number of you who know it from the scientific point of view, but whether he talked of Asia, Africa, Europe or North or South America, you have found his knowledge sound. A few of you have caught him in seeming errors, but I think that every such case arose from misunderstanding, or from generalizing from local conditions.

St. Mars was English and many of his stories were of English animals, birds and insects. Naturally he called them by the names used in England. In this country the name used in England sometimes designates an entirely different animal. For example, some of his stories mentioned polecats. In America polecat generally means skunks—I confess that, until the point arose, I did not know they are not the same animal. What St. Mars said of the English polecat (Putorius foetidus) is true of that animal and probably at least approximately true of the real American polecat or black-footed ferret (Putorius nigripes), but not true of the common American skunk, who is of an entirely other genus (Mephitis mephitica) or of his smaller brother of our West and South (Mephitis Spilogale). There was a similar misunderstanding through trying to identify the English buzzard with our own.

Perhaps we in the office should get some scientist to translate St. Mars' animals into North American terms, and then load his stories with footnotes or do violence to the text itself. But these studies in nature are not dry treatises, but *stories*, printed primarily for their value as stories, and on the whole it seems better to leave them as he wrote them, merely giving general explanations in "Camp-Fire."

It is interesting to note that on his stories laid outside of England, of Europe, there have, I think, been no criticisms of his unfailingly exact knowledge of fact and then to note that St. Mars had never been outside of Europe. If he is a safe guide in countries he has never seen, it seems reasonable to trust him in the country in which his observations were made at first hand during a life-time of study.

WHETHER Major North's brother, our comrade Captain L. H. North, will O.K. this view of discipline among the Pawnee Scouts I don't know, but it comes from one who was on the ground:

Cleveland, Ohio.

I knew Major North and frequently met him and the scouts between Julesburg and Cheyenne during the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad.

THE Pawnees were never disciplined in a military sense. On one occasion when they were to start on a scout early in the morning, three days' rations had been issued to them. They ate every ounce that night and had nothing to eat until the afternoon of the second day, when they shot a few antelope. I laughed at North about it and enquired if that was the way his command always transported their supplies. He said that he had given up all attempt to control such matters.

They obeyed orders and suggestions preliminary to a combat, but in a charge or sudden attack they reverted to their own methods and, as Mr. Sabin says, were whirlwinds in a fight. Major North stated that in an engagement near Wood River, Nebraska, where the Sioux were completely surprised, the scouts charged firing their repeating carbines, flung them aside when empty, used revolvers in the same manner and wound up the fight with bows and arrows. They had to go over the field afterward to recover discarded weapons. I saw the command as they passed through Julesburg; they had eight scalps decorated and stretched on hoops. The next night I witnessed their scalp-dance near end of track. It was the most thrilling savage rite I have ever seen.

A PAWNEE stripped for action and in war-paint was a striking object. The head was shaved excepting a narrow ridge of hair in the middle that stood erect like a roached mane from the forehead to the crown where it ended in a scalp-lock. A large circle about each eye was filled in with black, the rest of the face and portions of the body were streaked with vermilion and yellow. At a short distance their faces resembled decorated skulls.—E. T. SCOVILL.

BECAUSE he got bashful or something Garrard Harris didn't come across with his introductory talk to Camp-Fire on the occasion of his first story in our magazine, but he gave me some facts about himself and here they are along with one of his stories in this issue:

Associate editor of the Birmingham *News*, Birmingham, Alabama. For six years he was Special Agent and Trade Commissioner of the United States Department of Commerce, with his territory as Central America, the North Coast of South America, and the West Indies—wrote two publications of the Department that are the authorities on certain phases of our business with that region, "Central America as An Export Field" and "The West Indies as An Export Field." Has been over the entire territory, making many inland trips to remote localities, and to out-of-the-way places in the islands of the Caribbean, and knows the countries and the people he has visited.

A CANADIAN comrade cites a case of heroism similar to one described in our magazine. And won't he tell us about the Great War incident he mentions?

Regina, Canada.

In the issue of January 30th, 1923, I read with interest "The Death of an Indian," by Edwin L. Sabin. The reading of this recalled a similar incident that occurred during the war between Great Britain and the Boers. The story was first told me by a man who had taken part in that war as a member of the Canadian Contingent, and who is since dead. When he told it to me I really thought he had stretched it a bit and it wasn't till a few years later, when reading a book on the war by the famous Boer general, De Wet, that I found he repeated the same incident in almost every detail.

GENERAL DE WET says he was attacking a farmhouse held by a small British detachment and after a considerable fight the British surrendered. When he arrived at the house he found a young English lieutenant standing up and leaning against the wall for support. He had a writing-pad and pencil and was writing a letter. De Wet noticed the ghastly look on the boy's face and then saw he had been hit by a bullet which had cut across the abdomen and his bowels were not only protruding but hanging to the ground. The boy finished his letter and handed it to De Wet asking him to see it was sent, as it was to his mother in England. He then collapsed and died. De Wet says it was the bravest thing he ever saw.

I personally saw, what to my mind, was the bravest thing I ever heard of as it was done in cold blood, so to speak. It happened during the Great War in the battle of the Somme, 1916. However, I haven't space to relate the story here, but if you would care to have it, I would be glad to give it to you at any time.— —— ——.

THERE are still, however, quite a few of *Swain's* adventures yet untold, adventures that make good hearing.

THIS was hastily scribbled between trains, and the name of the place was not given. There seems plenty of testimony that the sting of scorpions, tarantulas and such can prove fatal under certain conditions.

I have noticed that the attached article refers to scorpions (or as they are known in Mexico, alacrans) as being practically harmless. I do not agree. On June 4, 1923, a Mexican baby died of an alacran sting in the hospital of a railroad company here, while its mother screamed in the agony of her knowledge that the baby would not live.

Two months ago a laborer on the same railroad was stung on the sole of his foot (they wear sandals, do the peons of Mexico) and he died within fifteen hours in horrible agony, crying out to his saints to relieve him of his misery.

Some of the scorpions (alacrans) are *not* deadly or even very poisonous. There is, however, a type (small, red) of scorpion usually encountered in the State of Nayarit, Mexico, that is seven times out of ten deadly unless hypodermic injections are obtainable at once.—FREDERICK DIXON.

NOW it happened that some time ago Edgar Young and W. E. Brandon fell into a dispute at Camp-Fire over Latin-America data and, as such things sometimes do, a difference of opinion grew into a rather acrimonious argument. We try to bring only friendliness and good fellowship to Camp-Fire and I had not realized there was any real offense in some of the arguments between these two comrades, but offense was taken, perhaps justly, and with that start their letters became more heated. So I passed no more of them to you.

All well and good, but that left one of them, Mr. Brandon as it happened, without chance to reply before you to the last broadside from his opponent. Will you then, if you remember the argument, make allowance for that fact and then forget all about the whole business? Both are good fellows and I've an idea that if they could have met in person each would have cared more about the other man's friendship than about a difference of opinion, for neither is an habitual chip-carrier.

Let's hear from comrade Brandon on the American prisoner in the Chiriqui prison, Panama, who told one of our comrades that he was serving thirty years for killing a native in self-defense and that conditions in the prison were very bad. The comrade to whom he told this reported the case to Camp-Fire and many letters have come in response.

There seems no doubt whatever that said prisoner was getting no more than he deserved and that conditions in Chiriqui are nothing to worry about. The Panama *Star & Herald*, though knowing in advance that most of the prisoner's claims were unfounded, sent a representative to investigate on seeing the report in "Camp-Fire." My thanks to many of you for sending me their extensive article on the subject and for writing me from your own personal knowledge. Also for other copies of the *Star & Herald*, one of the most interesting papers that blows into our office, with marked articles on various other subjects.

AMONG other things, the *Star & Herald* points out that the limit of punishment for any crime is only twenty years in Panama. It states that this prisoner was sentenced to twenty years, the limit—that he was serving a sentence of 18 years and 9 months on two counts, 15 years for murder and 3 years and 9 months for forgery. The paper's unannounced representative found him lying on a cot in the 50 by 25 foot general cell room, chatting with another prisoner. The eight or ten men in this room all had access to the patio. He had no complaint to make except that he was "tired of the same kind of chow every day." He was transferred from Coiba to Chiriqui in April, 1922, to get treatment for serious venereal disease—which would account for his "emaciation." He escaped and was recaptured in 1917 and 1920 and, the *Star & Herald* continues. "Just prior to his removal from Coiba he fomented a wholesale jail delivery in which the death of the Warden was a part of the plot. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Warden is an American."

Now Mr. Brandon's letter. As you will see, he is in position to give what might be called final facts in the case.

Colonia Penal de la Isla de Coiba,
Panama.

I was well acquainted with the prisoner referred to. As to his being an American, I am not so sure. He had certainly lived in the U. S., however. Nevertheless, his record shows him to have been born in Poland. He told me his parents were German. So much for his nationality.

IN YOUR remarks on the letter you ask for further data. I enclose a clipping from the Panama *Star & Herald* (English section) relative to the case. As I am head of the Penal Colony for the Panama Government I am in a position to furnish you with the facts of the story, including the final chapter, which was written only yesterday. The facts as given by the *Star & Herald* about food and cell conditions are correct. I may mention in this connection that I have managed a prison for the United States Government and the prisoners had no better food, no more of it, and had far less liberty and fewer privileges.

The man in question was serving a sentence for killing the owner of a coast boat, stealing the boat, selling the stolen cargo and a few other things in connection. He got only fifteen years for a murder for which he would have been hanged in the United States.

He was sent to this penal colony, which is situated on an island about three hundred miles from Panama City and about forty miles from the coast. He was transferred back to Chiriqui prison (Panama City) for treatment for advanced stages of syphilis. It was at this time that Mr. Napier must have seen him. When I asked the prisoner about it he laughed and added: "Oh! they all fall for that steer. It's a money-maker for me." Prisoner friends of his assert that he collected $400 or $500 begging in this manner during the fleet manoeuvers this year—but that was his business and aside from the story.

JUST a few weeks ago this "young lad" of the "doubtful crime" obtained a gun and a pass to go out on the street with his guard. At a nice quiet spot for a murder he jabbed the gun in the guard's mid-riff and pulled the trigger. But the gun missed fire! When he told me of this occasion he added: "I'll be sure of my arms the next time!" He has been accused of another revolting crime commited while a fugitive from the Panama penitentiary, but I believe was never brought to trial for that.

On account of his many escapes and attempted escapes he was again sent to this island and when I received him I warned him to be sure not to attempt an escape unless he was certain to make a clean getaway. I don't blame any prisoner for "beating it" when he has a chance. My business right now is seeing that they do not have a chance. He replied that if he ever went again he would be in a position to make any one sorry who tried to recapture him.

ON JULY 26th, returning from work, he escaped his guard and took his machete with him. I notified my prison camps that night, guarded my boats and then hit the jungle after him. On the 27th I unsuspectingly passed within a few yards of his hiding place at that time. Had it been within a few feet I should have left my head with him as well as my gun. A machete is quick and silent, you know. On the afternoon of the 28th I found him and ordered him to surrender. It was at close quarters and I guess my gun looked good to him, for he drove at me with his machete. I fired in the air, thinking he would "duck". No "duck," but he swiped again. I fired again. We buried him yesterday morning.

He is not the only "hard-boiled" American we have, but he was one of only two long-time Americans in custody here. One more long-timer was recently incarcerated, I understand, in Panama, but am not sure.

Incidentally race hatred can't be claimed in the case, for I'm a "gringo" too.—W. E. BRANDON.

SO, IF it was a Camp-Fire comrade who first stirred up this case, it was also a Camp-Fire comrade who closed it. And reported it to us the day after the funeral.

COPIES of the *Star & Herald* were sent me also by comrades Forrest E. Smith, of the 33rd Infantry then at Ft. Clayton, C. Z., Fred E. Schwarz of Chicago, who enclosed a letter from a police magistrate in the Zone, H. C. Martell of Ancon, Edgar Young (article sent to him by M. J. Conway of the C. Z.) and by a number of others who did not give their names. In addition, quite a few of you wrote in concerning the matter. It is cooperation of this kind that makes our Camp-Fire not only a friendly gathering but an organization with unique facilities for collecting data on almost any subject.

From the Executive Department of the C. Z. comes the following:

Balboa Heights, C. Z.

The man is presumably George Dittmar, of Chicago, who shot the captain of a native sailing boat in the back and stole his boat. He was convicted of murder and sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment.

The only other American now in prison in Panama is a former soldier, whose crime was shooting in the back the chauffeur of a jitney in which he was riding, in order to rob him. After the murder and robbery he attempted to burn the body in order to conceal the crime. He was condemned to serve fifteen years. He escaped recently, and so far has not been recaptured. At the time of his enlistment he stated he was from Kansas City, Missouri; when discharged he gave his address as New York City.

IN THE States these men would presumably have received capital punishment. The law of Panama makes imprisonment the maximum punishment.

Convicts in Panama are confined in a penal colony on Coiba Island. It is in charge of an American, Robert Lemastus, who was formerly the deputy warden in charge of the Canal Zone penitentiary.

The treatment of criminals is always a matter of debate. According to the standards of our time, however, I should say that these men have received no more than their due, and that they have been treated as well as prisoners usually are. They are not in charge of the American Government.

In general, I may say that "railroading" an American in Panama isn't done. There are occasional police court injustices, where a minor official may exercise tyranny before he can be checked, but in cases of importance the newspapers give full publicity and the Americans on the Isthmus, unofficially or governmentally, take such an interest that manifest injustice is practically impossible. In the cases of Dittmar and ——, for instance, the general American opinion was that they got no more than they deserved.—C. A. McIlvaine, Executive Secretary.

THE above is dated October 30, 1922, since which time Mr. Lemastus has evidently been succeeded by Mr. Brandon.

From L. D. King came a letter that seems to account for some of the differences of opinion expressed:

Post Hospital, Fort Amador, C. Z.

Before reading Mr. Napier's letter I wandered to the prison and looked around a little, and there have been great changes since Mr. Napier was there. There are no more prisoners in the cells he speaks of. the main wall has been done away with and only the main building is being used, for colored men or natives. The long termers are transferred to an island. In the compound Mr. Napier speaks of, there has been erected a memorial to the French that were lost, in the early construction days of the canal.

To my knowledge there are no white men in Chiriqui doing any long time—there may be on this island near the coast of Panama.

I am a soldier on the Zone and get around a little. Would like to hear from some ex-soldier that may want some info. about some pal; will be glad to look him up, or any other things that I may help any one on.—L. D. King.

THE next letter from Wisconsin, presents things in a somewhat different light:

Waukesha, Wisconsin.

Was stationed at Fort Grant, Panama Canal Zone, as a soldier for two years and know a little of the prisoner whom Mr. Napier wrote of.

The prisoner's name is George Ditmar, from Chicago. He was confined for murder, but am sorry I cannot give details or circumstances involved in the case except that on one occasion when I had a chance to speak to him for a few minutes, he stated he was innocent of the charge against him, that the authorities had no substantial evidence on which to convict him, but that he could not get justice in the Panamanian Courts.

At one time he was editor of *The Link*, a paper formerly printed in Panama City and after his imprisonment and until his articles were suppressed, he wrote for the Panama *Star and Herald* mostly seeking aid in his case and describing his life in Chiriqui Prison.

After awaiting trial in that hell-hole for eighteen months, he was sentenced to ten or twelve years. Later he escaped, was brought back and given an additional ten years to his sentence. Have heard he again attempted to regain his freedom but met with the same fate; if so, his total sentence approximated thirty years.

Soldiers occasionally visit the prison bringing him tobacco, cigarettes, etc.

I must say prison conditions are deplorable and should be remedied. It is damp, unsanitary and the food served is poor. The solitary confinement cell opens on the court, or compound, with no light or ventilation except for a small opening at the bottom of the door for passing food. I once saw a native prisoner's face at this hole, apparently lying on the floor to get fresh air and watch passing visitors who are allowed to enter the gates on Sunday.

Adios, amigos.—F. R. Mann.

FROM Lowell, Mass., another comrade wrote to us about past conditions:

Lowell, Massachusetts.

As I was stationed at Empire in the Canal Zone during 1917 and 1918, I was very interested in that letter of David R. Napier.

AS TELEPHONE operator I had lots of spare time and during afternoons was nearly always in Panama City. I visited the prison many times and have seen and spoken to the prisoners in the compound.

This lad must have been imprisoned since I left there, as I don't seem to remember him. If he killed in self-defense, let's hope something can be done to get him out, for he will never live over five years in that hole. The food is rotten, the sanitary conditions are terrible. It is true about the water coming in the cells at high-tide. If a man ever gets out, he's done for anyway, for he'll be a wreck. Full of syphilis, fever, lice and whatever else you can get by such a hole. That place is full of dope and I guess they need it.—Edward H. Duff.

THE next letter came from a sergeant of Marines, a comrade at that time stationed in Hawaii:

Naval Operating Base,
Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Hawaii.

I was in that city a number of years ago and have stood on that same prison wall. I heard at the time that the water came into the dungeons at high tide. I do know that the walls rise right from the bay and that a guard told me there were cells beneath the waves. There are a number of tales whispered about those grim old walls and what they shelter.

You will undoubtedly receive letters on the subject from much better authority than I, and I am mostly concerned in wondering if this Napier is David Roscoe Napier, First Sergeant, U. S. M. C., and if so, I think you can accept his letter at its face value—he is pretty prone to "know his dope." We are old shipmates. By the way, that same "Top Soak" is an old hanger-on at the Camp-Fire—and I have hung around the blaze for the past ten years (ever since I was a kid!)—Fred W. Hopkins.

HAVE seen Chiriqui myself from the outside, but my recollections are too indefinite to be of any value. Whatever the conditions there, it would appear that they can be of no further interest to the prisoner in question. It would seem, too, that there are now no long-term American prisoners in Chiriqui and that any such are likely to be sent to Coiba where an American and a Camp-Fire comrade is in charge. If conditions in Chiriqui are not all they should be, and if American or Canadian prisoners are or may be confined there, there are surely enough Americans in the Zone who would know of such conditions and take up the matter, in which task I'm sure Camp-Fire would be glad to help if it can. If conditions are as good as can be expected, or if North Americans and other foreigners are no longer sent there, we have no warrant for complaint.

THE Constitution of the United States, our fundamental law, says that "the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." The anti-weapon cranks say that infringement of this Constitutional right of ours is necessary for the sake of policing the country. Are the police powers of any community more important and more to be preserved than are our fundamental Constitutional rights and liberties?

Or is it just cranks who are responsible for the big anti-weapon movement? There is a very large treasury backing their campaign. But no one except the few in charge of their campaign can find out where that money comes from. Neither can the average American citizen find out just *who* is really back of this campaign. It is a secret movement. Why? Working for what secret ends that it dares not let the public know?

Does part of that money come from Russia? The Bolshevist minority Government still has funds for propaganda if for nothing else. A fanciful idea that the anti-weapon movement is a Bolshevist campaign in disguise? Not so very fanciful! There could be no more logical step for them to take in their admitted program for establishing Russian Bolshevist control of this country. For years the anti-weapon laws in New York State and elsewhere have been proving that the actual, practical result of such legislation is to disarm the decent citizens but to leave the criminals and revolutionaries with all the weapons they desire.

Also, it can't be just cranks back of this anti-weapon movement. There are lots of fools in this country, but it's too hard to believe there are enough such —— fools to back this movement in sincerity and good faith. Not after they consider how many millions of bottles of liquor are smuggled into the country despite all efforts to prevent. Not even the most ardent prohibitionist can hope for the day when our thousands of miles of coast-lines and borders don't leak millions of bottles.

It's even easier to smuggle in revolvers and automatics. And one of them lasts a whole lot longer than a bottle of liquor. And it wouldn't take very long to smuggle in enough for a very large-sized revolution, to say nothing of the supply already here that would escape confiscation.

It doesn't look as if fools and cranks were the real anti-weapon movers, though heaven knows there are plenty of them connected with it as enthusiastic and unconscious dupes of the real movers. It's a pretty safe bet that back of this anti-weapon move are the Bolsheviks, I.W.W., and other revolutionaries, reenforced, of course, by the criminal element in general. They would be fools *not* to back it. It will leave them with plenty of weapons and disarm the general citizenry. Would Moscow miss trying for so obvious an advantage?

DON'T forget that most of our original cover paintings are for sale to the highest bidders. Canvases will be sent express collect to the highest bidders one month after the magazine on which they are reproduced appears on the stands. Minimum bid, $10 per cover.—A. S. H.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the first and third issues of each month. Full list in first issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualification and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1 American Waters
BERIAH BROWN, 1624 Biegelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPT. A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 3633 New Hampshire Ave., N. W., Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPT. A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Postage two cents.*)

7. South Sea Islands Part 2 French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).
CHARLES BROWN, JR., P. O. Box 308, San Francisco, Calif. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

8. ★ Australia and Tasmania
FRANK MORTON, care *Triad* magazine, 19 Castlereagh St., Sydney, Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Postage ten cents.*)

9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

10. ★ New Guinea
L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, *via* Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (*Postage ten cents*).

11. Philippine Islands.
BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4, Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

12. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 714 Marquette Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with ten cents in stamps NOT attached*)

13. Japan

Grace P. T. Knudson, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

14. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo

Capt. Beverley Giddings, Morgan City, La. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

15. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan

Gordon MacCreagh, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

16. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters

Capt. C. L. Oliver, P. O. Box 2882, Tampa, Fla. Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

17. Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan

George W. Twomey, M. D., 41 Rue de France, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting.

18. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria

Robert Simpson, care *Adventure.* Labor, trade, expenses, outfitting, living conditions, tribal customs, transportation.

19. ✠ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo

Charles Beadle, care of Ramsey Direct Service, 44 Rue d'Hauteville, Paris. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Postage 12 cents.*)

20. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand

Capt. F. J. Franklin, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

21. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East

R. G. Waring, Corunna, Ont., Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

22. Africa Part 5 Morocco

George E. Holt, care *Adventure.* Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

23. Africa Part 6 Tripoli

Capt. Beverley Giddings, Morgan City, La. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

24. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

25. Africa Part 8 Sudan

W. T. Moffat, Sudan Customs, Khartoum, Sudan, Egypt. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

26. Turkey and Asia Minor

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, geography, races, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

27. Bulgaria, Roumania

(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

28. Albania

Robert S. Townsend, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

29. Jugo-Slavia and Greece

Lieut. William Jenna, Plattsburg Barracks, New York. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

30. Scandinavia

Robert S. Townsend, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

31. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland

Fred F. Fleischer, 464 Park Ave., West New York, N. J. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.

32. Great Britain

Thomas Bowen Partington, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information.

33. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile

Edgar Young, care *Adventure.* Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

34. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil

William R. Barbour, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

35. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay

William R. Barbour, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information.

36. Central America

Charles Bell Emerson, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

37. Mexico Part 1 Northern

J. W. Whiteaker, 1505 W. 10th St. Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

38. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California

C. R. Mahaffey, care of Roadmaster, S. P. Co., San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

39. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land and Northern Quebec

S. E. Sangster ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Also Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern Ungava and Keewatin. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

40. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario

Harry M. Moore, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

41. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario

George L. Catton, 94 Metcalfe St., Woodstock, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. *Postage 3 cents.*)

42. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District

T. F. Phillips, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

43. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta

Ed. L. Carson, Monroe, Wash. Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

44. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin

Reece H. Hague, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

45. ✠ Canada Part 7 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec

Jas. F. B. Belford, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

46. Alaska

Theodore S. Solomons, Larkspur, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

47. Baffinland and Greenland

Victor Shaw, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

48. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.

E. E. Harriman, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

49. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico

H. F. Robinson, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance, oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

50. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.

Frank Middleton, 509 Frémont St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

51. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains.

Chester C. Davis, Helena, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

✠ *(Enclose addressed envelop with three cents in stamps—in Mr. Beadle's case twelve cents—NOT attached)*

52. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country
(Editor to be appointed.) Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, outdoor photography, history and inhabitants.

53. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. Whiteaker, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

54. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.
Joseph Mills Hanson (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

55. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

56. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

57. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River
Geo. A. Zerr, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See next section.*)

58. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks
Raymond S. Spears, Inglewood, Calif. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

59. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers
Howard A. Shannon, care *Adventure*. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

60. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville
Howard A. Shannon, care *Adventure*. Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

61. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians
William R. Barbour, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

62. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala. Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.
Hapsburg Liebe, Box 432 Orlando, Fla. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

63. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine
Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main St., Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

A.—Radio

Donald McNicol, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

Victor Shaw, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads—songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. Gordon, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. Donegan Wiggins, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. Lewis Appleton Barker, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), , care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Tropical Forestry

William R. Barbour, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

G.—Aviation

Lieut.-Col. W. G. Schauffler, Jr., General Airways System, Inc., Duryea Bldg., Connecticut Ave. at L St., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

H.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

Fred. F. Fleischer, 464 Park Ave., West New York, N. J. *United States:* Military history. Military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general, "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command.

I.—American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

Arthur Woodward, 217 W. 125th St., New York. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

J.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write J. Cox, care *Adventure*.

For general information on **U. S.** and its **possessions**, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash, D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For U. S., its **possessions and most foreign countries**, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico,** and customs receiverships in **Santa Domingo** and **Haiti**, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska**, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii**, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba**, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. Rowe, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.**, Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **Canal Zone**, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National **Rifle** Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. Morrall, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

Personal

READERS have been asking for the autobiographies of "Ask Adventure" editors; and those staff members who believe that a few words about themselves will promote better acquaintanceship all around, are responding to the request. The order in which these autobiographies are printed doesn't signify anything. They are withdrawn from the files at random:

Ile de Lerne, par Vannes,
Morbihan, Brittany, France.

Here goes for a short one as my section don't take up a whole floor in the "A.A." I've entered the roaring forties, so I must be getting old; for the other day I was hunting my earliest memory. This is it (but don't let Pussyfoot see): About three or four I must have been, and in a floating store at Bangkok; dad gives me a glass of fizz to sip; I bolt the lot; result, said floating store put to sea in a cyclone and my father roaring with laughter. Now that's not the way to bring a son up! Maybe these psychoanalytical guys can get a hold of that and prove why I've never become a useful citizen of any country.

Well, I was educated less than more in England, quit as soon as I could and bolted to South Africa, where I became a full-blown trooper in the B. S. A. P. After that, being still infantile, I rushed into a war that didn't concern me—the Boer—and had quite an amusing time in an illegal corps specially constructed for looting, where I was taught the gentle art of how to carry a marble clock on my saddle-bow and how to pour petrol on grand pianos in order to make the house burn well.

Fate is always funny if left alone. It was an Irishman, Redmond, who bawled blue murder about our nice little Kitchener family party with the result that we were disbanded by cable, and the chief political bottle-washer of the moment—British, you understand—scornfully repudiated the bit of mud on the lion's tale—and incidentally we didn't get our whack for the last lot of loot. Then came various odd jobs, running around with columns and trying to turn remount crocks into polo ponies and what not.

After that, a streak of hard luck and strenuous selling of cheap jewelry, running a betting agency, finally winding up in an exploring expedition up Barotse and Kongo way. Then I bought a tall hat and started company-promoting in London; companies refused to float, so went to East Africa and Kongo, trading, transport-running, hunting; back to London—another tall hat to kid the public into putting up a quarter of a million to run nice little boats on the Lower Nile; French partner scuttled the ship and I went to Borneo rubber-planting.

After that came back in time to wade into the Morocco mess-up, helped lug one Sultan off the throne or rather from under the green umbrella and shove another one there; but, knowing nothing of certain secret European agreements, found my little—or she would have been a big—craft scuttled again. After that I decided that, whatever natural abilities I may have been blessed with as a pirate, the times were out of joint, so gracefully I retired and took to crime with my pen just in time to watch the Kaiser give me lessons in how not to do it.

Since then France, America and France again, where I'm sitting on a small island—like Brother Glass in Tristan da Cunha—hunting some one to adopt it. 'Smatter of fact, thought I was "getting on in years" and ought to settle down. Xzps%og$ and Jxt⅓£ koffski! (This isn't a Russian swear-word; merely my feelings.) Not that I don't like an island; the whole trouble is that it hadn't occurred to me before buying it that the —— thing is like my companies—won't float. If I could rig a sail and wander some I'd never quit. Well, well.

Now I'm going to put over my favorite joke; usually reserved for Englishmen, who somehow don't seem to appreciate it.

Scene: Tait's, San Francisco. Myself alone. Enter fellow, English from head to toe, clothes and cane. Sits behind, alone. With coffee suggest he join me. Hesitation. Accepts. Half-way across table—

"Oh, but you are English?"

Reassured, he sits. Small talk. Tells me he's going to Australia and adds—now, you Aussies!

"Of cawrse, shouldn't go theah. Beastly country. Low fellers. But my brother's over theah."

Inquires whether I've been long in America. I tell him about three years.

How did I get on? Etc. Then:

"Aw, well, I don't find it so, y'know. They hate us."

Pause.

"After all, it's natural. We are the superior race!"

Rapid curtain.

Fact. And the cream of the jest was that he came of a pure Scot family. But I so wanted to grab him, stick a pin through his thorax and put him in my specimen case.

Now as for you "A.A." inquiry fellows, take it from me, I've a whole heap of sympathy. Lots of you want to know how to go to Africa and find adventure smiling at you. Can't be did these days without a wad, and a pretty thick one, too. And as for jobs, pretty near the same thing—nothing doing. In my section the gentle Goanese or an "educated" colored gent does all the small jobs, such as might help a white man out when looking around; otherwise it's appointment—railway, Government, mine, plantation or what-not; and these countries are yelling for settlers:

Oh, yes, certainly, if you please, sir. But—how much have you got?

Otherwise they want capital to develop the country—you can't blame 'em for that—and a mighty rich country it is, too. There a white can't do as he could in the States—squat on a piece of land and work it himself, nester fashion; a white can't do manual labor in that heat, even in the higher altitudes, because of the actinic quality of the sun's rays on or near the equator.

It's sometimes rather depressing to have to reply consistently, "Don't!" and I guess many of my brother "A.A." editors feel the same thing. But there it is. I'm not promoting companies now, so I may tell the truth! Good luck and happy days to you all.

Use this as you think fit.—CHARLES BEADLE.

As to biography, well, I was born in Texas—on the Rio Grande, in '79. Went to school in Austin. Yukon country '97-'98. Philippines '98-1902. China, Japan and Hawaiian Islands on the way back. Newspaper work since. Western part of the

United States mostly, ranging from Seattle to New Orleans. Advertising salesman, writer and manager at different periods. Some news experience.

Out-of-door crank always. Eighteen-carat gun-crank. Have fished many waters with light tackle. Can sling a diamond hitch and pack a balky mule.

Know Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Arizona. Have ridden a cayuse through northern Mexico as far south as Monterey and west to the coast. One of the fellows who can't stay put—sell advertising for a living—write for fun—mostly.

Wife is a newspaper woman.

And all of this has nothing to do with my being an expert on the sections I am covering. Still I imagine you will find few complaints regarding my work—and that only when some individual asks the impossible.

Guess Raymond Spears can tell you that I *know* the Chesapeake Bay section. He has knocked around on it himself.—Howard A. Shannon.

Brookline, Mass.

I fear that my life has been of too prosaic a nature to be of interest. I have been neither adventurer, explorer, sportsman or anything of the sort. My ancestors on all sides came to the Colony of Massachusetts Bay between 1620 and 1635, being without exception Englishmen. Here in New England they have remained, in various professions and occupations, principally law and medicine, taking their part in public affairs, among them being several Colonial Governors, Congressmen, etc.

Although never having seen military service myself, they have done their bit from my sixth great-grandfather, Major Samuel Appleton, who commanded in King Philip's War, in every American War excepting the very recent one, when my own physical condition precluded my being allowed to serve. In the American Revolution eight great-great-grandfathers and thirteen great-great-great-grandfathers served in the American Army. I allude to this not as in any way a matter of credit to myself, but as perhaps explanatory of my own interest in history and firearms, the cause of which would seem to me about the only source of interest that could possibly exist in connection with myself.

For three generations my forbears on both paternal and maternal sides have practised law in Bangor, Maine, where, after preparatory school, Brown University, and graduating from Law School, I followed in their footsteps, being admitted to the bar in 1900. After eleven years of general practise there, ranging from murder to divorce cases—such is the range of a country general practitioner—and some service in the Maine Legislature, I removed to Brookline, Mass., and have maintained law offices in Boston for the past twelve years, having been in active practise for a period of twenty-three years.

Although not an adventurer I have been somewhat unfortunate in having my share of accidents at different times and places, having broken an arm, several ribs and a collar-bone, sprained an ankle (worse than the foregoing), been blown up by a gasoline explosion when my launch burned to the water's edge—I do not swim—had my head cut open when knocked overboard by a jibing boom, as well as on two other occasions, and undergone several other disasters at sea. The nearest to an adventure was when I broke my backbone—six vertebræ up—in the desert of Lincoln County, southern Nevada, and after a seven-hundred-mile ride in saddle, stage, auto and train the surgeon at Los Angeles chopped out the lower six segments of the said vertebræ. Although perhaps not an adventure, it was an experience both interesting and painful. However, at the age of forty-five I find myself feeling well, young and happy.

Firearms and other weapons of all ages, of which I possess several hundred, are of intense interest to me, equally from an artistic, a historical and a mechanical standpoint. My other principal interests are the early pirates and buccaneers—concerning whom I have been able to gather a large original library—and the science of heraldry, on all three of which subjects I lecture with stereopticon slides when occasion presents itself. I have enjoyed answering queries of readers as to ancient arms, and will be very glad to show my collection to any such as may give me the pleasure of a call at my home.—Lewis Appleton Barker.

Chicago, Ill.

Born in 1878 in Devonshire, England, son of J. N. Franklin, Esq., County Magistrate for Devon; educated Blundells School. Travels through Holland, France, Germany, Channel Islands when nineteen years of age. Joined Royal 1st Devon Yeomanry Cavalry, 1899; proceeded S. Africa, fought all through Boer War, attaining rank of Capt., Kings' and Queens' medals 5 clasps.

After Boer War resigned commission, returned to S. A. and rode horseback from the Cape to the Limpopo. In 1903 proceeded to U. S. A. with Gen. Piet Cronje, Gen. Ben Viljoen and a party of Boers and British veterans with Boer War spectacle at St. Louis World's Fair. In 1905 identified in Guatemala revolution (suppressed).

Proceeded to Europe; returned to New York 1905; proceeded to Natal from New York on tramp steamer *Black Prince* for Bambata Rebellion, Natal, 1906. During 1907-1908 very extensive travels in Africa, engaged in hunting, prospecting and suppression of opium-smugglers in Portuguese East Africa, Transvaal. In these two years visited every place of importance in Rhodesia, East Africa, Transvaal, Cape Colony, Orange River Colony and Portuguese East Africa.

Returned to U. S. A. in 1908; became Secretary of the Sound Copper Co., of Knights Island, Alaska. After this citrus raising at Consolacione del Sur, Cuba. After this settled in Hubbard Woods, Ill.

First war work: organization Canada, helped recruit American Legion; proceeded to England, enlisted as private, served Scotland, France; served in North Russian expedition as officer commanding remounts for "Syren" force; rank of major in charge of sledge journey three-hundred-mile march over snow and ice, Soroka to Archangel to relieve Archangel, one of the most remarkable marches ever made by British forces. For this service received the Order of the British Empire (Military Division). Disabled in N. Russia and invalided from service. Returned to U. S. A. Director and President of Adventurers' Club of Chicago.

The foregoing is long-winded, but at that I have missed out a whole lot. Yours for Adventure.—F. J. Franklin.

Laramie, Wyo.

I'm afraid there has not been anything worth autobiographying. Like all great men I was born humble, but failed to achieve any of the greatness.

I've always had a "hankerin'" for adventure, but failed to meet up with any considerable portion of that. Enlisted for the war with Spain; didn't get across; too old for the last disturbance.

I've managed to see considerable of this Western country; but the trouble is, I was born some fifty years too late. Still at that I've camped, hunted, trapped, and seen quite a lot of it, especially so of the two States I represent for *Adventure*.

Just an every-day sort of a cuss, I guess, trying hard to get along with my fellow man, not always succeeding, but doing fairly well; try not to do anything to be ashamed of, and imagine I do fairly well at that.

Guess that is all. Really I have never done anything that I'd consider worth while.—FRANK MIDDLETON.

The full statement of the sections in this department, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

The American South Seas

WHERE the waters swarm with six hundred varieties of fish:

Question:—"Can an American rent land on a South Sea island? How hot does it get when it is the hottest? Does any South Sea Island belong to the United States or France? What are the main crops they raise?

Can a workingman find work on the islands, or can a man make money at fishing if he has a row-boat or a motor-boat? What is the fare from San Francisco? Would I have to get a passport before I could get to travel?

How many white people on the islands? Is the drinking-water all right? Is there any big wild game? Are there any cannibals on the islands?

What months are best to travel by sea to avoid the storms? Do the steamships go direct to the South Sea Islands or to Australia? Is there any common-labor work going on the island or on other islands in that country? Have you seen a white man that has more than one wife on any of these islands?

Could you give me the address of a steamship company that sells tickets to the passengers? Can a man work his way on a steamship to pay for his fare?

How many inhabitants are there in the largest city in the South Sea Islands? How much is it for board and room in the largest city on the island?

Please don't publish name or address."

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—There are no large or any other kind of cities in the South Sea Islands. And the Pacific is such a mighty big pond, with such a mass of bits of dirt known as islands, that you are scarcely aware of the vastness of your query concerning "the South Sea Islands." With a few exceptions, there are no towns, as you know civilization in California.

The best thing I can do to satisfy your request is to tell you about America's own bit of territory in the S. S.—and that will also answer your question as to passports. You will certainly need such if you go to French, Dutch, or British S. S. But let me tell you a little piece about American Samoa.

The islands of American Samoa from east to west are: Rose Island—a coral atoll, uninhabited and practically of no value—Manua, Olosega, Ofu, Tutuila and Aunuu. The islands of Manua, Olosega and Ofu are generally known as the Manua group. The population of the group, including the few whites, is 7,550. The seat of Government is the naval station at Pago Pago Bay, on the island of Tutuila.

American Samoa is divided into three general administrative divisions, corresponding to the Samoan political divisions that have existed from the early days. District governors are chosen from the county chiefs. The village councils are chosen from heads of families.

Tutuila contains forty square miles, is extremely rugged, and has extensive cultivations of coconut trees.

Pago Pago—pronounced Pango-Pango—the safest and finest harbor in the S. S., is really the crater of an immense volcano with the south side broken away and open to the sea. Climate, sub-tropical. Hurricanes are rare. Rainy season, December to March. No cannibals.

December's heat, 81 deg.; June's, 70 deg. If you go easy, you can stay and stand the heat for years—if you take strong drink it is no good to you.

There are no public lands—all owned by the natives. The U. S. Government had to pay full compensation for the land its offices are upon.

It is said there are 600 varieties of fish in Samoan waters, but you could not use them commercially when you caught the best of them. No market.

I have not the latest list of steamship rates, but if you write to Messrs. Hind, Rolph & Co., 230 California St., San Francisco, who represent the N. Z.-U. S. Company, running steamship services into the S. S., you will get information. Don't know about working your passage.

Second-Hand Revolvers

ALSO a few words on reloading ammunition:

Question:—"I am considering the purchase of a revolver or so, and I would be greatly indebted to you if you would answer the following questions:

1. Would you advise the purchase of Colt's .45 cal. automatic or the old six-shooter that we hear so much about—I favor the latter—and why?
2. Should I buy second-hand in good condition or otherwise?
3. Where can I secure them?
4. Is it practical to reload the shells for such a gun?
5. What price should I pay for the gun? I request that you refrain from publishing my name."—J. M. C., Fairmont, Minn.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—1. I will recommend the purchase of the good old six-shooter for your use. They always are reliable.

2. Yes, a good second-hand revolver will give good satisfaction if in good repair. I have several and can depend absolutely on them.

3. I will advise a letter requesting a list, to Wm. R. Burkhard, 143 East 4th St., St. Paul, Minn. He has a very large stock of good second-hand revolvers and automatics on hand.

4. Yes, it's thoroughly practical to reload good ammunition, but it takes a good long time to become proficient. I can beat the factory product, I find, but it took me years to learn how. I favor having a .22 revolver, Colt or Smith & Wesson, to learn and keep in practise with and a .45 for occasional use and self-protection.

I will say that I favor the old S. A. Army Colt .45 in place of the double-action revolvers, but that is a matter of personal preference. I own and use both, I may add.

Military Training Camps

MR. FLEISCHER, who answers questions on Army matters, is a first lieutenant in the 310th Infantry:

Question:—"Please send me application blanks to military Summer camps, next Summer.

Also, if you have time, please tell me the following: Where is the camp to which I would go? When and at what dates would it be? How about taking a wife; *i.e.*, what disposition would I make of her there?"—J. EDWIN SMITH, Orgas, W. Va.

Answer, by Mr. Fleischer:—The State of West Virginia is located within the 5th Corps Area, with headquarters at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indianapolis.

No plans have as yet been made for the 1924 training camps, but no doubt they will be held again during the coming year from August 1st to 31st inclusive. I would suggest that you write on or about March 1, 1924, to the Adjutant, 5th Corps Area, at the above address for further information, mentioning *Adventure* and my name and rank.

As far as taking a wife is concerned, you must be an exceptionally good husband, because if you figure on finding time to be with your wife while undergoing training, you will have to sacrifice a lot of sleep. These camps are not all play, and in order to build you up physically setting-up exercises and drills will make you tired enough to turn in as soon as you can.

I am enclosing a blank we used here last camp (1923) which will give you some information. It is not to be used, however.

Let me know in March how you are making out. I want to keep a list of recruits who attend Camps 1924 through the medium of *Adventure*.

Here's hoping you make it.

Opportunities in New Guinea

A TEMPTING field for big capital. Note the adjective—big:

Question:—"1. Are there any opportunities for agricultural enterprises in Papua? I have had some experience in tropical agriculture but have only about $5,000.

2. Where can I get information about lands and land tenures?

3. About what would it cost to live in that country for a year?

4. Are there any openings for a white American of fair education who can offer good references? I am a college graduate and have traveled extensively in this country and in Europe."—JOHN B. DAVIS, Talala, Okla.

Answer, by Mr. Armit:—Yours is the letter I like to receive. You state in a few lines *exactly* what you want to know. I will try to oblige.

1. New Guinea is blessed with vast areas of undeveloped lands in the three sections into which it is divided—Dutch, Mandatory Territory of New Guinea, and the Territory of Papua. The two latter colonies are administered by Australia.

Tropical agriculture in New Guinea is *not* recommended for the man of small capital. Any number of opportunities exist for the employment of *considerable* capital in the production of copra (dried coconut-kernel), cotton, tobacco, coffee, cocoa and sugar. The latter will be the leading industry in the vast island-continent when the capitalists of the oversea lands realize the possibilities of the industry in New Guinea.

Sugar-cane is indigenous to New Guinea; the leading canes grown in Queensland were raised from stocks purchased from the native growers by agents of the leading Australian sugar-growers. At present there is not one sugar plantation in New Guinea! But soil, rainfall, climate, all constitute New Guinea as the natural home of sugar-cane. Opening up jungle lands is extremely expensive, and the long wait for results—often a matter of several years—adds to the capital outlay.

2. Information regarding Papua lands is available at the office of the Commissioner for Lands, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua. For similar information regarding the Mandatory Territory of New Guinea write the Commissioner for Lands, Rabaul, Territory of New Guinea. Information regarding lands in Dutch New Guinea is obtained from the Resident, Merauke, Dutch New Guinea, *via* Batavia, Java, Nederland Indies.

3. Board and lodging in Port Moresby costs fifty dollars per month. Cost of living on a plantation would average seven hundred dollars a year for grub, which mostly arrives out of a can. Clothes, tobacco, washing, shoes, etc., would add about three hundred dollars to the yearly expenditure. In all about one thousand dollars per year. The wage of an average plantation overseer or clerk ranges from one thousand four hundred and twenty-five to two thousand dollars per annum. Nothing princely, is it?

4. No chance of employment in New Guinea, as the supply of men familiar with tropical industries is more than the demand. Do not think of coming to New Guinea unless you have an assured job to drop into, or sufficient coin to keep you going for a year while you get your bearings.

Sorry I can't be more hopeful, but the foregoing is the truth. Write again if you feel like it.

Bigger than the U. S.

DID you ever stop to figure that Canada has more acreage than is comprised in our own union of forty-eight States?

Question:—"I am desirous to know about the hunting, fishing, trapping, history and homesteading in Canada, and if it isn't too much trouble to you, will you kindly send me the same if you please.

I hear a lot about Canada and I will visit it next Summer."—CAPT. JAS. E. BURKE, Kingsman, Ariz.

Answer, by Maj. Belford:—You have given me a tall order. Canada covers more ground than the

U. S., you know. It has every sort of game, from the grizzly to the weasel, that flourishes in a temperate or cold climate. Her furs are the best, and there is a big trade in them. Trapping is largely carried on by Indians and breeds working for the fur-trading companies, though there are many white men in the business as well.

Fishing is best in the eastern Provinces and in British Columbia. Deep-sea fishing on each coast, and salmon, bass, trout and many other varieties in the rivers and lakes.

Homesteads can be had on the prairies and in New Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. The terms are easy.

Now for the full dope write the Department of the Interior, Ottawa, Canada, asking them for maps, books and full information on the things you want to know, for both eastern and western Canada. When you have looked this through if there is any further help I can give you write me again.

You will make no mistake in visiting our country. It's full of possibilities for the man who means business. Best wishes for the trip.

Origin of the Indian Languages

AND a confession by a man who is acquainted with six lingos spoken by natives of the arctic regions. Maybe Mr. Woodward—whose appointment as "A. A." man in charge of American anthropology north of the Panama Canal is announced on page 185—might have something to add to this if he should be asked:

Question:—Will you please tell me about the origin of the Indian language, and what language it closely resembles? I have read quite a few Indian stories, and have always wanted to know about their language. I looked for information through the *Adventure* magazine and thought I'd pick on you to answer my question."—STEPHEN J. CHESSMAN, San Pedro de Macoris, D. R.

Answer, by Mr. Shaw:—You say you thought you'd "pick on me" to answer your query *in re* the origin of the Indian language; and I'll say that as a "picker" you are a first-class top-sergeant. Why pick on me? I never did you any harm!

Seriously I'd like to be able to reply in detail, but that would imply that I am an expert philologist. I have a working knowledge of Navaho, also the Greenland and Baffinland Eskimo language, as well as a little of the Haida, the Tlinkit and Eetlahkatla languages of the Alaskan Siwash. I am not familiar with the history or origin of any of these, and an attempt at an intelligent reply to your question would end in a guess; probably no better than your own might be.

There is strong evidence claimed by students of the very earliest history of the North American continent, that war-parties from ancient Central America invaded the United States *via* Mexico (the territories now so-called) worked up through what are now the middle-West States and reached as far north and east as New England. These were colonizers, bringing with them their customs, home life and, I suppose, their language.

Whom they found here, if any, I do not recall; but I think the invaders are supposed to have antedated the mound-builders. No doubt they conquered and absorbed those they found, if they did find them, and substituted their own language. I do not know just what race these invaders were, either, though I understand they were more ancient than the oldest of the Aztec race.

I do know that the northern Eskimo language contains a plethora of vowels, in many ways resembling Chinese. These Eskimo are undoubtedly of Mongolian ancestry, showing all the physical characteristics of that race, and I think it quite probable that their language may be a bastard derivative as well.

The Indians of southeastern Alaska, however, have a language that sounds like an asthmatic raven with the pip, being a series of clicks, grunts and lisps; indeed they claim to be able to converse with the ravens. Where such an odd means of communicating thought originated I've always been curious myself to know.

Those described differ materially from the language of the Sioux, Apache, Ute, Blackfoot, Flathead, Penobscot, etc., tribes as I have happened to hear them spoken, although all have in common a multitude of vowels.

Getting About in the Ozarks

ALSO a method of curing a dog of gun-shyness:

Question:—"Are the people living in the wilder parts of the Ozarks friendly with strangers?

Would a 30-30 carbine do in place of a 30-30 rifle?

What size traps would be best for trapping in this region?

What manner of an outfit would one need to travel by wagon?

How could one break a three-year-old collie dog of gun-shyness? I have a dog which is a fine dog except for this fault."—E. E. MASON, Kansas City, Mo.

Answer, by Mr. Thompson:—The people in the wilder parts of the Ozarks are very hospitable to strangers so long as the strangers do not try to tell them how to run their affairs. You will like the 30-30 carbine very much, especially in this Ozark country where all the hunting is practically in timber. I would take traps from No. 1 to 4, according to size of game you go after.

For wagon outfit, feed-box detachable and carried in the rear. Have wagon-cover with big bows so you will have plenty of room. For short trip don't need stove, but be sure of an ax above everything, extra clothing, slicker, rubber coat and blankets. Ordinary cooking-utensils.

You will find you will get over country better with a small team than with a single big horse. The reason of this is that teams are used all over the mountain roads and roads are cut out so from this kind of travel that it is hard on a single horse to keep where they did and haul any size load. Don't have a stiff-tongue wagon. The drop tongue is best as you can turn on narrow roads with it.

Begin shooting with paper-cap pistol at feeding-time, then .22 rifle, and then gradually work up to a shotgun. Have the dog on a lead so he can't get away when you shoot. Don't pet him after shooting when he shows fright. Act as if nothing had happened. If it is a bad case it will take a long time to cure.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

BAILEY, ROBERT W. Age seventeen. Left his home in Brooklyn, N. Y., March 17, 1923. Five feet eleven inches tall, brown eyes, brown hair, medium complexion, prominent nose and good teeth. Wore dark gray overcoat, gray and black or blue suit, white shirt, soft collar and button shoes. Carried a Winchester rifle with him, and grip initialed "R. W. B., Jr." Any information will be appreciated by his parents.—Address ROBERT W. BAILEY, 530 7th St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

LOPER, FRED. Last heard from he was in Black Horse, Whitepine Co., Nevada, 1908. My letters returned from there. Any information will be appreciated by his old trail pal.—Address ARMY ADAMS, 714 W. Main St., Grass Valley, California.

HART, HENRY S. Known as "Pop" to the crew of the S. S. *Thuban*, at Cramp's Shipyard, Philadelphia, in March, 1919. About forty years of age, five feet six inches tall, weight about one hundred twenty-five pounds, sandy complexion. At one time a printer, probably typesetter with a Philadelphia newspaper. Had some ability as cartoonist. If he will write to "Robbie" he may have news of interest to him.—Address C. W. R., care of *Adventure*.

VINCENT, "TED." Was at Jefferson City during the Summer of 1922. Last heard of in Shreveport, La. Resident of New Orleans, La. Any information will be appreciated.—Address J. J. MCCAFFREY, 429 10th Ave., Munhall, Pa.

HOGAN, R. M. Age thirty-eight, five feet eight inches, dark complexion, wore dark blue suit, black soft hat, blue shirt and is a railroad man, but is probably among camps. Any information will be appreciated by his wife.—Address MRS. R. M. HOGAN, 1607 W. 25th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

GERRARDE, A. C. Licensed marine engineer. Employed by the U. S. Shipping Board for many years. Last heard from on Sept. 5, 1923, when he was in Boston, Mass. Any information will be appreciated by his mother. —Address MRS. N. GERRARDE, 227 Bourbon St., New Orleans, La.

SOUTHWICK, ALFRED WHALES. Left his home at Southwick's Grove Middleton, R. I. March 21, 1884. Last heard from in June, 1884 when he wrote his mother stating that he was to make a cruise among the rivers and creeks of Virginia on the yacht *Petrel*. Age about sixty-five years, five feet eight inches tall, small gray eyes, brown hair, had birthmark, an outline of a fish, on his left arm. Any information will be appreciated by his son.—Address ALFRED W. SOUTHWICK, 25 Tilden Ave., Newport, R. I.

VITIE, ALEXANDER M. Left Derryloughan Co., Leitrim, Ireland about 1853. Last heard of in Kingston Barracks, Canada. Any information will be appreciated.—Address RICHARD A. M. VITIE, Box 20, Mullan, Idaho.

HUGHIE. Please come home. Everything will be forgiven. Agnes is sick. I am heartbroken.—MARY.

LEIDER, JOSEPH. He is an Ex S. F. 2 C., U. S. N. R. F. and served aboard the U. S. S. *Lake Superior* during the late war. He was mustered out of active service from the above mentioned ship in 1919. Was discharged from the Naval Reserve Force in 1920 giving his residence as 512 E. Burnside St., Portland, Oregon. Any information will be apprciated.—Address HENRY S. BRITT, 312 Broadway, Newport, R. I.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

ATKINS, E. E. S. JR.; Allen, Mable, Mrs. Bayless, Dorothy; Banks, Jimmie; Breath, Hastlar, Gal.; Bennett, Thomas T.; Brady, Patrick; Blum, M. A.; Buchanan, James; Bell, Ralcy Husted; Crafts, H. A.; Chrisholm, Byron; Cardie, Sinn; Caney, Jack; Cuttriss, C. A.; Cortelli, Fatima; Crafts, L. S.; Currie, Mildred; Colwell, L. Margaret Miss; Coxey, Willard; Cronin, Bernard; Dowson, Edward; Edwards, Henry A.; Emerson, F. S.; Exner, Donald W.; Frandsen, R. M.; Ferguson, C. C.; Gilfillan, Ruth; Gaylord, Alfred; Gene, Frenchie; Gormley, W.; Happy, H.; Hungerford, G. E.; Hilles, Lieut. Wm.; Huntington, C. H.; Hurst, Freda; Holston, S. C.; Hutchinson, A. M.; Irvin, T. W.; King, J. D.; Kelly, D.; Kimsey, R. W.; King, Homer B.; Kahele, Edward Augustine; Livingston, J. K.; LaGlaire, Peter; Loeck, A. J.; Marilee, Nelson; Matter, James K.; Miths, B. Radke; Moran, Edward J.; Mosse, James; MacIllrath, W. R.; Murphy, Elsbeth; Madison, Artell; McCravey, E. L.; Mennet, Geo.; Major, Max D.; Merritt, Florence; Morris, Troy: McGinsey, Fred: Noble, George; O'Farrel, Patrick; Ober, Bertha; Oangha, Rosebud Starr; Pierce, Samuel S.; Perry, James; Paterson, Robert G.; Paradis, A. B.; Patten, Lewis E.; Polowe, David; Presler, Phil.; Roe, Charles; Robinson, Jack P.; Robertson, Mrs. Chester; Rice, Alex; Roland, Tom; Rhodes, Carrie L.; Ringer, Robert Derr; Stillons, George; Schmidt, Alex. R.; Sprague, T. R.; Smalley, Jack G.; Singlev, Anton; Saidmore, John C.; Seabury, Ralph; Trekell, Mrs. Cynthia; Todd, Homer Eps.; Warner, J. E.; Weston, Edward; Wittell, Chester; Wilman, Cynthia; Webber, E. C.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

JENNINGS, JOE. Age about twenty-eight, about five feet six inches tall. Picked up as workaway by S. S. *Wondrichem* at Marseilles, France. Went with us as far a Gibraltar. Saw you recently in Shipping Board in Greenwich St., N. Y. Remember Rosas, Spain. Write your old pal "Shorty."—Address WILLIAM HURD, 309 Beverly Road, Brooklyn, N. Y.

BUCK. Where is our Buckie?—GENEVIEVE, MAYBELLE and JACK.

LOOMIS, ALBERT B. Age about thirty-nine years. Last heard from in 1899 at State Public School in Sparta, Wisconsin. Any information will be appreciated by his brother and widowed mother.—Address CHAS. LOOMIS, 1723 N. Halsted St., Chicago, Ill.

BUFFETT, CAPTAIN JAMES. Master of sailing vessels. Last heard from by letter on May 18, 1920, at that time he was in Port Bolivai, Texas, aboard the American Schooner *M. Turner* operated by Whitney Bodden Co. Please write your old friend.—Address M. GARCIA, 315 W. 8th St., Port Arthur, Texas.

RAYMOND, FRED. Age twenty-one years, blond hair, blue eyes, about six feet tall, scar under left ear. He was discharged from the U. S. army March 20, 1923. Last heard of he was employed by the Hiberman Shipping Co. of New Orleans, La. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address MRS. AUGUST SUHAN, 93 9th St., Troy, N. Y.

WOLFF, CHRIS. Last heard from at Seattle, Wash. Important letter from Australia or to Australia—can not make out which. Communicate with STATION 71.—Address 119 N. 16th St., Omaha, Nebraska.

HARDING, SAMUEL MERTON, or A. O. Ardell. Ex. U. S. Army Artillery-man. Late of Fort Mills Corregidor, P. I. Last heard of on transport bound for states. Left Manila April, 1922. Remember our agreement. Write your old pal.—Address BILLY, care of *Adventure*.

CHISLOM, ROBERT. Last heard of in 1914 in London, England. Was a telegrapher by trade. Probably wireless operator now. Light complexion, blue eyes, rather heavy build, height about five feet six inches, age about forty-two years. [Escaped 1912] *Titantic* disaster. Any information will be appreciated by his father-in-law.—Address LEWIS MCCLOUD, Trace, W. Va.

FESSENDEN, ROBERT. Age thirty-eight years, six feet tall, weight one hundred and thirty-five pounds, dark hair and brown eyes. Last heard of in Des Moines, Iowa. Please write to your sister.—Address MRS. M. R. JOHNSTON, Gen. Del., Cleveland, Ohio.

RICHARDS, CHARLES. Harry has been run over by a car and is constantly asking for you. Please write.—Address MRS. C. S. RICHARDS, 9402 57th St., Portland, Ore.

LOYD. Am sorry for my neglect and am heart broken. Will leave the city with you if you wish. Write me care of *Adventure*.—K.

BASSETT, GEORGE. Came with me from Grand Forks, North Dakota to Denver, Colo. in Sept. 1922. Was then lost track of. Any information will be appreciated.—Address STANLEY FOSTER, P. O. Box 175, Los Angeles, Calif.

STAFFORD, GEORGE. Last heard of in Springfield, Ohio, 1919. Was with the A. E. F. during the late war. Is a locomotive engineer by trade. Light complexion, dark eyes and hair, height about six feet, age thirty-three years. Any information will be appreciated by his stepmother.—Address P. A. STAFFORD, Trace, W. Va.

THE following have been inquired for in either the Dec. 10th or Dec. 20th issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine:

BRIGGS, W. S.; Byron, William; Canfield, Mary and and Charles; Celentano, D. (Celly) Cooper, James; Culberston, L. Carroll; Dakers, C. C.; Davidson, Alexander; Fuller, Charles; Garlick, Clyde W.; Hargus, Claude; Johnson, Theodore (Toady); Lawrence, Joseph Simon; Leask, Thomas; Martin, Neely; Miller, Floyd, Chester; O'Connor, Stephen; O'Connor, John; Schecter, S. M.; Sheehan, Marvin; Slinwinski, Stanley J.; Sly, George; Tankersley or Tankushy, Isaac; Ureta, Raul Morales; Welson, Charles; Wilderman, Arthur; Wonderly, George W.

MISCELLANEOUS—C. E. Geo.; Lambert; Would like to hear from any of the member of Hope of Gloster Lodge, No. M195 and Rourke's Drift Lodge, No. M181, I. O. G. T. that met at the Soldiers Home on Canton Road Tien Tsin, N. China in 1914.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February 10th issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JANUARY 30TH ISSUE

Besides the **complete novel** and **two complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

MORE THAN HALF A KING *Sidney Herschel Small*
A missionary encounters Japanese torture.

THE GAP IN THE FENCE *John Eyton*
A dog's life in India.

THE LONG KNIVES A Five-Part Story Part IV *Hugh Pendexter*
Americans spread death in the Shawnee village.

THE MASK *Clements Ripley*
A man who didn't believe his friend could play square.

THE CHALLENGE *William Harper Dean*
Cotton, cattle and county lines.

THE SALUTE *Conroy Kroder*
Patriotism comes to its test in a Manila night.

Still Farther Ahead

IN THE three issues following the next there will be *long stories* by Bill Adams, W. C. Tuttle, Gordon MacCreagh, Leonard H. Nason, J. Allan Dunn, Wilbur Watkins, Arthur D. Howden Smith, Frederick J. Jackson, Barry Scobee and J. D. Newsom; and short stories by H. C. Bailey, Frederick Moore, William Byron Mowery, E. S. Pladwell, John Webb, Michael J. Phillips, Conroy Kroder, F. St. Mars, George E. Holt, Sidney Herschel Small, John Eyton and others—stories of Alaska, the War, the South Seas, the jungle, South America, the frontier, Japan, the West, ancient France, Labrador, the Philippines, Indians, sailors, cowboys, pirates, soldiers, knights at arms—of adventurers the world around.

YOU Are Wanted for a Better Job

That was the good news they brought him just a few short months ago. Then he held an ordinary job working long and hard on small pay. **Today** he is a high-salaried Draftsman earning nearly $100 a week. How did it happen? It isn't a long story because it's all so simple, so easy. You can do just what he has done if you'll start by reading every word clear down to the coupon that marks your way to better pay.

It all started one evening while he was sitting at home—reading. He saw the advertisement of the COLUMBIA SCHOOL OF DRAFTING and he knew it was his opportunity to earn from $50 to $100 a week, in an uncrowded field with a big, sure future. He sent in the coupon. Later he enrolled for the COLUMBIA course. Today he's making **real** money. His brain is working as well as his hands. He's standing on the threshold of a brilliant future with all that it means—independence—money—success— happiness.

Made $275 Extra in 3 Days. He recently received $275 for one drawing that he made in spare time in three days.

How About You? Are you working up hill or down? Count the money in your pay envelope next pay day. You'll find the answer there.

Make $50 to $100 a Week. COLUMBIA will train you to be an expert Draftsman in your spare time at home by mail. There's lots of room for you if you act now.

Promotion Is Quick. We'll Qualify You for a high-salaried position in the Drafting field and keep you in touch with openings for Draftsmen in the big machine shops, industrial plants and United States Government departments. Men who start as Draftsmen are often advanced to Chief Draftsmen, Chief Engineers, Production Managers and so on.

Get the *Right* Training. Mr. Claflin, the founder and director, stands personally in back of the COLUMBIA SCHOOL OF DRAFTING. You spend no time in long-winded theories—useless and expensive to you. You start on actual drawing work the day you receive your first lesson.

You Need No Previous Training. The course is easy to understand and easy to follow. Many students are qualified even before they complete the course.

Success Calls Men of Action Only. If you are a man of action clip the coupon now and show that you are a man of action. Keep right on top of this opportunity to make real money. Don't go looking for a pair of scissors. Tear the coupon off and mail it right now. Get started now.

What We Give You

Practical Problems. You are carefully coached in practical Drafting work.

We Help You Get a Job. We help you get a position as a practical Draftsman, as soon as you are qualified.

Personal Instruction and Supervision Throughout the Course. You receive the personal instruction and help of Roy C. Claflin, President of the COLUMBIA SCHOOL OF DRAFTING and a practical Draftsman of many years' experience.

Draftsman's Equipment. We furnish you with a full set of First Class Drawing Equipment and Drafting Instruments as shown in the picture below when you enroll. You keep both sets on completing the course.

Consultation Privileges. You are free to write us at any time for advice and suggestions regarding your success.

Diploma. The diploma we give you on completing the course attests to your proficiency as a Draftsman. It is an "entering wedge" to success.

Free Subscription to Drafting Publication, "The Compass." You are given free a subscription to our helpful, inspiring publication, "The Compass."

U. S. Civil Service Commission Needs DRAFTSMEN

The following are a few of the many positions open in Government Departments from time to time. The salaries are starting salaries, subject to increase. Practically all of them carry a bonus of $240 a year additional.

Architectural Designer	**$4,000**
Chief Draftsman Naval Aircraft Factory, per day	**15.04**
Aeronautical Draftsman—Field Service of Navy Dept., $5.20 to $12 per day.	

FREE BOOK

Send in this coupon today. Immediately on receipt of it we will send our book, "Drafting—Your Success," which tells about Drafting and its opportunities for you as well as the special easy method of learning Mechanical Drafting through COLUMBIA methods.

Free Drafting Outfit

We give you Free, with our course, this professional Drafting outfit. It is yours to keep when you complete the Course.

THE COLUMBIA SCHOOL OF DRAFTING

Roy C. Claflin, *President*
Dept. 2212, 14th and T Sts., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Free Book Coupon

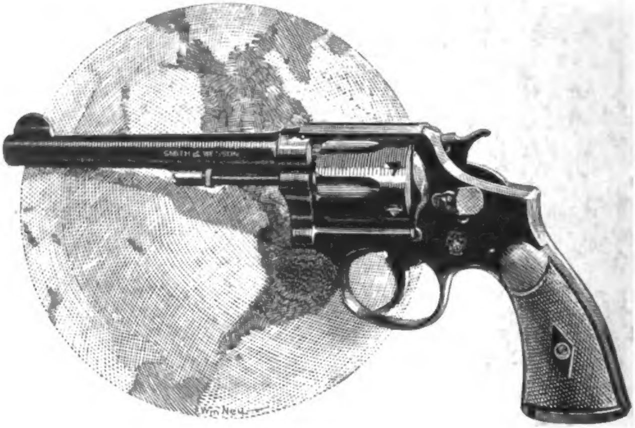
COLUMBIA SCHOOL OF DRAFTING,
Dept. 2212, 14th and T Sts., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Please send me without charge your free illustrated book on Drafting, telling me how I can secure your complete Home Study Course and your help in securing a position as Draftsman.

Name..

Address..

City.................... State.................... Age......



THIS is the revolver which by performance since 1858 has justly earned the title "Superior." No picture can do it justice. You must see and handle a Smith and Wesson revolver to appreciate its high quality. Your dealer will be glad to point out the characteristics responsible for the justly merited popularity of this superior arm.

SMITH & WESSON

Manufacturers of Superior Revolvers

SPRINGFIELD
MASSACHUSETTS

Catalogue sent on request. Address Department L

No arms are genuine Smith & Wesson Arms unless they bear, plainly marked on the barrel, the name

SMITH & WESSON, SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

Branch Offices: Los Angeles, Cal., Seattle, Wash.
Western Representatives: Andrew Carrigan Company, Rialto Bldg., San Francisco, Cal.